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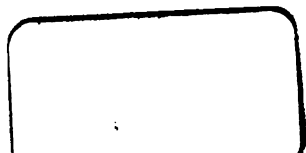
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A DANCING BEAR



JOHN BARNETT

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JOSEPH : A DANCING BEAR



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JOSEPH: A DANCING BEAR

**BY
JOHN BARNETT**

**WITH TWENTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS
BY L. LESLIE BROOKE**

**LONDON
EVELEIGH NASH
FAWSIDE HOUSE
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FOREWORD

MY DEAR JOSEPH,—

Our acquaintance is, to my loss, of the briefest, and I fear that our friendship is of a somewhat one-sided nature. For when I saw you, for the first and last time, trudging with your masters along that Kentish lane, you paid little enough heed to the human who stood and watched you shamble into the dusty sun-flecked distance. You had more important things to think of. There was that pole, for instance, that Henri carried, Joseph, was there not? It was painfully obvious how the harsh road galled your feet, and it hurt me rather to see the hopeless look in your small eyes. I have not yet succeeded in forgetting it. Well, it was with a certain pleasure, Joseph, that I read a week later of the "fourteen days' hard" to which your masters had been sentenced for gross ill-treatment of their charge.

For the rest, please take notice that, in the most cowardly fashion, I lay upon you all responsibility for what is written here. I have failed, I know, to do

FOREWORD

justice to your genuine charm and honest worth, but perhaps in one particular I have succeeded in expressing (however inadequately) your real sentiments. I refer to your feeling for Henri and the man Charles. That you may escape from their clutches into some haven of peace and well-fed rest is the sincere hope of

Your friend,

JOHN BARNETT.

JOSEPH, A DANCING BEAR

I

HIS NARRATIVE OF A DASH FOR FREEDOM

A LADY stopped and looked at me the other day as I was dancing. She was a stoutish lady with a red face, a blue dress, and a romantic expression. I noticed her even in the midst of my exertions. There was something about her that you couldn't help noticing, even when you were as hot and cross as I was. I didn't stop dancing (that beast Henri saw to that), but I heard what she said to a lean friend with a respectful expression.

"Poor thing, I can't bear to see a noble animal degraded in that fashion! How it must be yearning for its ancestral glades, Miss Smith!"

Hum, I don't know about ancestral glades (I happened to be born in the Gardens at Paris), but I do

know that I was yearning for more food and something sweet. I felt that if I did not have some honey, quickly, I should go mad or do something desperate. I tried to convey this fact to my master, Henri, but I see now that actual violence is the only argument that has any weight with him. However, this stout lady's well-meant remarks gave me an idea. You see, I was beginning to be just about fed up with the man Henri, to use an English expression. Also with his accomplice Charles. It was about all that I was fed up with.

And the idea was that I should run away. Let me say at once that I am not naturally of an unruly or discontented disposition. With kind treatment I should have been ready to do my best for my masters, and share all hardships with them as they came along. But the way they treated me was abominable, simply abominable! Before strangers, or when Charles was taking round his cap, Henri would pat me and use terms of endearment. But you should have seen them when we were alone together! Ah!

And it was not as though we shared our earnings equally. There was something so unfair about the whole arrangement. I earned all the money, but it was they who got the benefit from it. There were times, of course, when we all had to go short. That was right



"I am naturally a graceful dancer."

enough, although unpleasant. But when times were good, when my elegant dancing had made quite a hit, I never had any honey or anything really nice by way of a treat. Henri and Charles would live like fighting-cocks at such times, but I would just have my usual meagre portion of uninteresting sop, which I detest. A bear is not a fool. That sort of thing makes him brood upon his wrongs.

And then I was getting dreadfully tired of shambling with sore feet along the roads behind those two inhuman Frenchmen. The dust and grit got into my handsome coat and eyes, and almost maddened me. But I hated it still worse when we stopped for a performance. There is something about the fag and annoyance of dancing that brings out all the worst of my character.

It is true enough, as Henri says with bitterness, that I will not always dance my best. Why should I? I am naturally a graceful dancer, but when they had been treating me worse than usual, this was almost my one chance of annoying them. So then I would just turn round and round in a clumsy circle. This would madden Henri, who well knew of what I was capable at my best.

Yet, on reflection, if dancing is bad, I almost think that turning somersaults is worse. There is something

so humiliating about it before the yelling children to a proud nature like mine. And it makes you feel so stupid and sore and dizzy. It hurts, I can assure you, to come down full length upon the hard road. I don't fall as lightly as I did once. Yet I would have done it cheerfully, if only those two Frenchmen had treated me like a bear and a brother. As it was, I determined to act upon the idea that had arisen in my mind.

We had had about three weeks of rain. And, by the way, what a climate this is of yours! I like you English humans, as compared with my two masters, but I don't like your climate a little bit. In those three weeks there was no money coming in, because no one wants to watch even me dancing in the rain. But we had to go on eating—at least Henri and Charles had to. I fancy they were trying to train *me* to live without any food at all. That was the impression they gave me, and a painful one it was.

Certainly it was not on *my* account that they pawned their gold earrings. I was getting such a tiny portion of sop at this time that I had to look at it twice to make sure that it was there. And my usual allowance is less than half of what I could do with. This sort of thing could not go on. For three weeks we had none of us been dry. Here I scored for once,

because my coat, loose as it had grown, was a good deal better than their clothes. I often saw them looking at it enviously. If they could have got it off me without actually killing me, I am sure that they would have done so. I went in terror of their trying it.

And then at last the sun came out—it really did. Even in your English summer the sun came out! We all three cheered up. Henri actually addressed me without hitting me, and Charles began to whistle. Ah! that whistling of Charles! It was a sort of blend of three tunes, which did gross injustice to all three. It is a misfortune to have a musical ear, I sometimes think. But he meant it to be cheerful, and it was not for me to hurt his feelings, even if I could have done so by anything short of a blow. Charles is not a sensitive man. We walked into a village with their clothes drying on them steadily, and my fur getting all nice and fluffy again in the sunshine. I am not a vain bear by any means, but I have always taken great pains with my fur.

And that is one of the reasons why I was so relieved to see the sun again. Not out of mere vanity, but because now that the earrings were gone there was nothing left to pawn—*except my coat*. I can

assure you that I had listened to one or two conversations between Henri and Charles that had made me positively shudder. It is only due to pure chance (the strange fact of your English sun shining) that I am not a carriage-rug at this moment. I should hate to be a carriage-rug ! Something so painfully degrading about it ! But that horrid danger had been averted, and in consequence I was feeling almost cheerful. The villagers also were welcoming the sun with pleased surprise. On the green they positively swarmed around us. Not only boys and girls, who pay nothing, but men and women, and toothless, aged rustics, grinning horribly. Oh ! I can tell you it was a scene to fire the blood, after three weeks of short commons and rain.

It fired Henri's. He was uplifted by the thought of much food and liquor.

"Do your very best, vile ingrate !" he hissed in my ear, "or become a carriage-rug !"

Charles also hissed something, but it won't bear putting upon paper. And that was their idea of encouraging me !

However, I also was eager for food. I danced as I had never danced before. It was a revelation of ease and grace to these ignorant peasants, even to Henri

and Charles, who had watched me often. And I threw somersaults until my back was a mass of bruises, and until the green was going round in a dizzy circle, and I could see ten million aged rustics, all toothless and all grinning horribly. They cheered me madly ; if they had had bouquets at hand I feel sure they would have thrown them to me. As it was, they threw nothing at all, which is something of a tribute when there are boys about. I was as one inspired. It was a veritable triumph !

We left that village at last, having taken one and eleven pence halfpenny, all in coppers. Henri and Charles were both pleased. Henri was talking vaguely about starting a circus when I had earned enough capital for the venture. He is an ambitious man and something of a dreamer, especially when slightly intoxicated. Charles, the more prosaic Charles, was speaking of dinner.

They had purchased food and liquor at a *cabaret*, and we halted upon a little common beside a deep and muddy pond. Then they ate and drank, whilst I, who had earned it all, I sat beside them, starving and muzzled, with my heart burning inside my hollow ribs. When they were gorged, Henri, having smoked awhile, produced sop from an unpleasing receptacle.

Have you ever eaten sop ? If you have, you will understand that this was the last straw. I had counted on something sweet and toothsome after my exertions. But it seemed that I had counted wrongly. The disappointment was dreadful, and then and there I came to a terrible resolve.

Henri removed my muzzle, and I ate all that he set before me to give myself heart. Then, when he tried to replace the hateful thing, I rose in my wrath. He menaced me with his stick, but I put it aside and pushed at him with my paw. I suppose I pushed pretty hard. He seemed to rise in the air, and fell with a hollow splash into the pond. Then I turned upon Charles, who seemed quite cowed, and in a moment he was beside his accomplice. Judging by their language, neither was seriously hurt. As for me, I took to my heels, showing a surprising turn of speed I flatter myself, with the fervent hope that I had parted from that abandoned pair for ever.

So imagine me tearing down the road. Oh, it was good to be free ! I made up my mind that it should go hard with me before any one put a muzzle upon me again. In a little while, when I judged it safe, I steadied my pace. I was slightly blown, and I wished to collect my thoughts. It was obvious that the



"He seemed to rise in the air, and fell with a hollow splash into the pond."

sooner I placed some miles between my masters and myself the better. I might go on running, of course ; but my feet were sore and I hate running. Why not, in these scientific days, avail myself of science ? Why not get a lift in a motor-car ? The thought pleased me, I determined to act upon it, and, hurrah, round the next corner I came full upon one !

It was a beautiful car, full of fine furry rugs (which made me shiver slightly) and dark red cushions, and all that sort of thing. In it were seated a small, plain-faced man in black livery and gaiters, a nice-looking, elderly gentleman, and, by the Great Bear, one of the very prettiest girls that I have ever set eyes on !

Somehow my lonely, desperate heart quite warmed to her at once. A mere glance assured me that she would not willingly hurt a worm, much less a decent bear. There was something altogether charming about her. I thought that all my troubles were over. But alas, I had forgotten that she and her friends might not be used to bears.

It would, indeed, be an understatement to say that my appearance surprised them. I fancy they had just stopped for repairs or something of that sort. Anyway, they were about to start again when I came

round the corner and, without attempting useless explanations, climbed over the back of the car and sat down beside the girl. I have always had a vague, platonic liking for the sex. Besides, it was the one vacant seat.

After that things moved very swiftly. Everything seemed to be moving except the car and I. The little man in black said something irreligious in pure Cockney, sprang over the front of the car, and dived underneath it. The elderly gentleman hurled himself on to the road upon the right, stood for a moment in dreadful doubt, saw the wide ditch beneath the hedge, appeared to hail it as a place of refuge, and vanished into it.

There remained the girl, and oh ! my heart bled for her. I was only a poor devil of a runaway, half starved and reckless, yet well disposed towards every human being in the world except two, but she appeared to regard me as a dreadful savage. Humans are sometimes very dull. This one gave a little squeal and her face went white. She sat for a moment as though transfixed, and I tried to lay my paw gently upon her arm to reassure her. Alas ! we are all of us islands shouting across seas of misunderstanding, as I once heard a nice young curate remark after he had

spoken to Henri about temperance, and after he had listened for a few seconds to what Henri had to say on the subject. This girl was only the more frightened by my gentle, well-meant gesture.

But it seemed to nerve her to action. With a whirl of dainty skirts she sprang over the left side of the car, saw the twin ditch to that upon the right, and availed herself of its fancied security. Personally, I sat on quietly where I was. It seemed the only thing to do. These people had been too swift in their movements for any chance of a quiet apology. And I had only wanted them to give me a lift !

Well, there we were ! Thank goodness, both the ditches seemed to be fairly dry. And, of course, for all I knew, English people of the upper classes might have some strange affection for ditches. There was a long two minutes of silence, and then the old gentleman peered courageously above the edge of his ditch and spoke :

"Wilkins," he said in a voice that tried hard to be stern, but that *would* quaver slightly, "where are you ?"

"A-laying down flat under the car, sir," Wilkins answered.

I was quite sorry for the young fellow. It seemed such a comfortless position to select !

"Why are you doing this, Wilkins?" his employer asked.

"Because somethink dreadful, somethink like an 'orrid grizzly bear came tearing round the corner and climbed right into the car and set 'isself down, sir," explained Wilkins, slightly surprised by the question. (I am not, of course, a grizzly.)

The old gentleman for some reason appeared relieved by the answer.

"Thank God ! he saw it too," I heard him mutter. "So it *was* real !"

I don't know what he meant, but the thought seemed to give him back his courage.

"Is my daughter in safety, Wilkins?" he asked.

"I 'ope so, sir, I'm sure," was Wilkins' answer, "but I can't really see very much from 'ere."

I began to respect that old gentleman. He half rose from the ditch, quite forgetting his fears of me, and then the young lady spoke.

"I'm all right for the moment, dear," she cried briskly. "I'm in the other ditch !"

The old gentleman lay down again, and appeared to indulge in grateful profanity. Then he seemed to meditate.



"He half rose from the ditch, quite forgetting his fears of me."

"Something will have to be done, Wilkins," he said at last rather accusingly.

"Yes, sir, it will," agreed Wilkins quite heartily. "I'm laying 'ere and trying 'ard to think *what!*"

There was another silence, and then the young lady spoke again. I was delighted to hear just a hint of laughter in her voice.

"What *are* we to do?" she asked. "Oh! just fancy, dear, if any of your volunteer regiment should come along and see their major in that ditch!"

Her father groaned like a man with a horrid vision before his eyes.

"I half wish they would—with ball cartridge," he muttered. "Some of them *are* about to-day, I know. And yet it is a terrible position for a man of my age and standing. So open to misconstruction and the laughter of fools. But I have it—this is a moment for tactics. The brute must be lured from his seat. Wilkins—are you listening, Wilkins?"

Wilkins assured his employer that he was.

"There is a luncheon-basket in the car, Wilkins. One of us—you as the younger, more active man—must creep out and—and spread the food upon the road. The creature is doubtless hungry. Whilst he

is eating we will swiftly resume our places in the car. Do you understand me, Wilkins ?”

“Yes, sir,” said Wilkins plaintively. “But will the animil understand my motives in coming out ? What—what if he ’appened to mistake them ? I ’ave to think of the dear young woman ’oom I ’ope to wed.”

“In the event of the very worst she will be provided for by the insurance people. Can it be, Wilkins, that at your age you are afraid ?” asked the old gentleman with a note of scornful wonder in his voice.

Wilkins was respectfully silent.

“I think perhaps we’re all a little afraid,” the young lady suggested. “Anyway, dear, I forbid *you* to let your daring spirit get the better of you. But what *can* we do ?”

“I must carry out my plan myself,” the old gentleman said majestically. “Wilkins can lie there, and contemplate his employer risking his life on his behalf.”

“Don’t you do it, sir, for me. Or, at any rate, not yet,” Wilkins said hopefully. “Give the animil a chance. Perhaps in time he may get tired of setting there !”

And then it was that I took a hand in the game. You are not to think that I had sat there and delighted

callously in the terror of this charming young lady, or of her venerable father, or of their prudent servant. Very far from that, I can assure you. But I *had* sat there waiting for one of them to make a reasonable suggestion, and hoping that they might understand in time that I only wanted a lift. But now, at the mention of the luncheon-basket, I had realised how cruelly hungry I was.

I groped under the seat, and discovered a heavy wicker-work receptacle. I had it up beside me in a moment, and one deft stroke of my claws removed the lid. I saw before me chicken and sandwiches, and rich, sweet pastry and cake. Try and imagine my feelings, I who had lived for so long upon insufficient sop !

I forgot these people who were my involuntary hosts, I forgot Henri and Charles, who were doubtless pursuing me with screams and tears of rage. I only remembered my hunger and this dainty food, and, crouching low on the creaking seat, I set myself to empty that luncheon-basket. I suppose I heard dimly the sudden tramp of marching feet, but my greedy appetite overmastered my caution. When I looked up at last, having finished every crumb, escape was hopeless.

The car was surrounded by many men carrying guns and dressed in a queer yellow uniform. They were all laughing and talking at once, and pointing at me. It seemed that they were what is called volunteers, and that the old gentleman was one of their officers. Considering the danger from which he and his party were supposed to have been rescued, I thought that more emotion might have been shown with decency. But you English are a frigid race.

He and his daughter had come out of their ditches, and Wilkins had crept from under the car. I read a certain amused hostility in the eyes of those around me, in all the eyes that were not fixed upon the girl, and I sat up on my haunches and prepared for a desperate resistance.

"What's to be done, Major?" said some one laughing. "We've only got blank with us, and, besides, he may be valuable."

"If he won't get out he shall have no mercy," the old gentleman said snappishly. "You will have to use your bayonets."

I don't wonder that he was cross. I was sorry to have made him ridiculous before his men. But I shivered at his cruel words. And then the young lady intervened



"She came up to me quite bravely, and stroked me with her small hand."

"No, no, he mustn't be hurt," she said gently. "I don't believe he means any harm. I believe he would get out in a moment if he knew what we wanted."

I clambered out of the car at once, and tried to bow to her. She was a darling, if I have ever seen one. Somehow she seemed to have lost her fear of me, for she came up to me quite bravely and stroked me with her small hand. Every one, even her father, who was obviously still disappointed in Wilkins' character, seemed better disposed towards me.

And then—and then—shall I ever forget the bitterness of that moment?—I heard a profane remark in French, and Henri and Charles came round the corner!

I would have made a bolt for it even then, but I could not move for fear of hurting or startling that girl. And so I really owed my capture to her, my one friend! And yet, to be truthful, I must add that the sight of Henri's stick seemed to take all the heart out of me. He ran forward with a scream of joy, and in a moment that hateful muzzle was upon my nose, and I was chained.

Henri made one of his flowery speeches to the company, explaining that I was his property, and

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Charles instinctively removed his cap, apparently with the idea of taking up a collection. But I was glad to hear the still sore old gentleman turn upon them fiercely.

"So he's yours, is he?" he said. "Confound you, sir, do you realise that he has half ruined my motor-car, and frightened my daughter and my fool of a chauffeur almost to death?" (Wilkins gave an inarticulate exclamation of protest at this point.) "Just see that you take better care of him in future, or the police shall hear of it!"

"And treat him well, please," said the young lady gently. "He does look so very, very miserable."

Henri explained that I was more to him than wife or child, or Charles, his faithful friend. And Charles, with a little heat, said the same of Henri.

So she gave them money, although I do not think she quite believed them, and then I had to watch her whirl away in the motor, leaving me to my fate.

But, never mind, I fancy I have taught those two to be more civil to me in future, and, anyway, I am going to run away again!

II

IN WHICH HE ASSISTS A FELLOW COUNTRY-WOMAN IN DISTRESS

ONLY the other day I heard Henri say to Charles, when he thought I was asleep, "*Zis cochon* Joseph can dance, when 'e chooses, as can no other bear in zis 'ateful England. It is my training. I 'ave imparted to 'im, even to 'im, somezing of my genius."

The man Charles was cross and sleepy.

"Ah!" he said grumpily. "You 'ave, both of you, a genius—for ze food!"

But Charles has an earthy nature. I mention this tribute in order that my great natural modesty may not conceal from you the fact of my undoubted talents. Because neither of my masters are the men to say a good word for me if they can help it.

Since I ran away that first time they have treated me with a cold, watchful severity that would have

permanently soured many natures. It has jolly nearly soured mine. But I always hugged to myself the idea of a second and more successful attempt at freedom, and I knew that if I had the patience to wait they would grow careless and my chance would come. It came the other day.

It began by our meeting something that you English humans call a "beanfeast," although I could see no beans about it. It was merely several brake-loads of men with red faces and straw hats and raucous brass instruments that overtook us as we trudged along a dusty lane. I don't suggest for a moment that they were intoxicated, but they were certainly in a condition that I should describe as jovial.

The man Henri had several definite vices, as I have hinted, but I do not deny for a moment that he is an excellent man of business. Directly he saw that beanfeast in the distance he scented a chance of profit, and promptly acted. He directed the man Charles to produce what they call music from his tin whistle, and he indicated to me that I was to stand at attention upon my hind legs at the side of the road.

I hate standing like this, and it is a matter of principle with me never to obey Henri's first order. It is the only way of keeping the fellow in his place.

But when he had shown distinct signs of being violent I condescended to arrange myself pretty languidly in the position he desired. The one definite advantage about standing at attention is that I hold the stick and Henri doesn't. It is far safer in my care.

Directly the brakes came to where I stood, there were cries to the drivers to pull up, and soon I was performing in the midst of about a hundred excited men, whose hot, red faces quite glowed above their huge white buttonholes. They made no secret about their admiration for me, and there was something about their generous applause that made me do my best. And my best, I can tell you, is just a little striking. It quite carried them away, and their contributions at the end of the performance took a peculiar shape. They pressed many drinks from many bottles upon my masters, not that they took much pressing, and would have given me beer from a great cask in a waggon had not Henri, like the pig he is, forbidden it. I was thirsty, and I rather liked the smell of that beer ; but I suppose Henri thought there might be less for him if I was given any.

By the time that the red-faced men climbed into the brakes again and drove away, my two masters were as near to good temper as I have ever seen them, and

they were clutching two bottles which had been presented to them by my admirers.

"Zey was good fellows, zose, for English pigs," Henri observed, gazing after the dust that the brakes had left.

"Eet was my superb music," Charles answered promptly, with the childish vanity that is one of the man's most offensive traits. "But I am 'ot and sleepy, and zere is shade in the field be'ind us."

We climbed heavily through a gap in the hedge, and lay down under some trees. Then they devoted themselves to one of the bottles, and when it was empty some thought of my wants appeared to cross Henri's callous mind. I mention the fact because of its rarity, and as an interesting proof of the mellowing qualities of the fluid you humans call "whisky."

"Zis *sacré* Joseph!" Henri observed with dreamy warmth. "Ze *cochon* is as ever 'ungry, I suppose. Wiz 'im it is ever eat, eat, eat! Ah! 'e is fortunate, a zousand times fortunate! 'Ow would 'e fare, I wonder, wiz some masters!"

I really did not care to think. No one could have given less or expected more than did this person Henri. But now he roused himself drowsily, and having removed my muzzle, spread a scanty meal of

sop before me. As I devoured it I could hear him chattering sleepily half to himself and half to me.

"Eet ees a ver' great pity zat ze nature of ze bear ees what eet ees," he muttered. "Joseph, my friend, why are you not more worthy of ze noble master 'oo would love you if 'e could? Ah! but I am sleepy, and ze zun ees 'ot! I 'ad not known zat eet could shine in zis—zis accursed land of pigs and fogs!"

He fell back upon the grass, and his eyes closed in a moment. Charles was already snoring unmusically. I finished my sop in a mood of joyful gratitude that was almost delirious. *Henri had forgotten to replace my muzzle.* Then I moved stealthily to the unpleasant black bag in which the stock of sop was kept, and engulfed it to the last morsel. I looked at my masters as they lay, dirty but peaceful, and for a moment a black thought crossed my mind. They were entirely at my mercy. Should I close all scores between us with two swashing blows? It was a temptation, but in a little while I mastered it. It seemed cowardly to strike sleeping men, and, besides—besides—I caught sight of that ironshod stick at Henri's side, and there is something about that stick that always unnerves me. I was just turning away, a little proud of my self-control, when I noticed that second bottle of whisky.

I picked it up, and extracted the cork with my claws in a twinkling. I sniffed at the contents, and rather liked the smell. That was an important moment in my life, I suppose, if I had only known it. Until then I had never so much as tasted alcohol. But ever since, alas that I should say it, I have had a craving for liquor that nothing will subdue. It is certainly cruelly hard to gratify it, but I believe that it will get me into serious trouble one of these days. Upon that occasion I put the neck of the bottle into my mouth, and tilted the end with my paws, as I had so often seen Charles and Henri do.

That whisky sent quite a glow through my body, and made me feel delightfully young and strong again. I left those two Frenchmen lying there asleep, and set out upon my travels. I remember that as I walked I began to lose something of my bitter hatred for them. Indeed, I felt good-natured and at peace with all the world. I almost had an inclination to get up upon my hind legs and dance for pure lightness of heart. But I conquered this, as being unfitted to my years and dignity. Besides, I had had enough dancing to last me for a lifetime. It was only the pleasant sunshine and my freedom that made me feel like this. If you dare to hint for one moment that I was even

partially intoxicated, I shall be seriously annoyed with you.

I was as sober as any judge, as I think my story will prove. I left the field, and walked steadily along the lane for a mile or two. I did not hurry unduly, and I came in time to a high stone wall that ran beside the lane. I strolled along beneath it, thinking of pleasant things like honey in great dripping combs, and that young lady in the motor-car who had been good to me. And just as I thought of her, and wished that I could meet some one at all like her, I came to a wooden gate in the wall and heard behind it the sound of much stifled but dainty laughter and many pretty voices. I made up my mind in a moment. Here were clearly many female humans, and female humans have always been kinder to me than males. So I just pushed upon the door with my paw, and something gave, and I walked in.

It was rather a queer scene that was revealed to my anxious eyes.

I halted behind some screening bushes and took it all in methodically. I was in a garden, a large, prim, high-walled garden, with many trees, and on a lawn before me countless girls were gathered. I suppose they were not really countless. I suppose if any one had had paper and pencil and a head for figures they

could have been counted in time ; but, of course, I was not able to do this. They seemed to be of all heights and ages, and I am only speaking the literal truth when I say that they struck me as being fresh and charming without exception.

Stay, I am wrong. There was one exception, but she was certainly not a girl. She towered above the slim, dainty figures around her, tall and strong and massive, and there was something about the very gleam of the round glasses upon her curved masterful nose that made me conscious of the impropriety of my presence. I am, of course, a male, and I could feel in my very bones that this powerful lady disliked and distrusted most males.

Even as I looked she held up a broad, ringed hand and the giggling and chattering died away. (I should hardly have believed such discipline possible if I had not witnessed it with my own eyes.)

“For shame, girls !” she said austere. “Be silent, I beg ! This is no moment for laughter or the encouragement of rebellion !” She raised her high-pitched voice a little. “Miss Barras, will you obey me, and come down ?” she asked severely.

And straightway a voice appeared to answer from somewhere in the air.

"But no, Mees Ormiston, I will not!" it said.

I raised my eyes and began to understand the meaning of the scene. At the edge of the lawn there rose a tree, shooting out many branches like a ladder from the ground, and half-way up it I now saw that a little lady was sitting. She was perched upon a great branch, and her small pale face peeped out from the green leaves. I realised that here was another fugitive, like myself, and my heart warmed towards her. Also, about her English there was something, a delicate suggestion, that brought back the Paris where I was born. It differed from the vile jargon of Charles and Henri, even as music differs—from the whistling of the man Charles.

"I give you one more minute in which to obey me, Miss Barras," stated the tall lady. "After that I shall take measures——"

But I shall never know what measures she could or would have taken, short of climbing the tree in person after that small rebel, for at that moment I interfered, moved in part by my sympathy for this little Miss Barras, and in part by the freakish spirit that had somehow possessed me since I had parted from my masters. I walked slowly forward into the open, and the little lady saw me from her tree.

"You must look to yourself, madame!" she cried. "There is a bear, yes, *mon Dieu*, a great bear, be'ind you!"

Madame turned at the words, and I shall never forget how her face changed as she took me in. I had fancied that she was superior to all the weaker emotions, but I was wrong. She gave a dreadful hissing shriek, and her high-coloured face went white. Then she bunched up her flowing skirts, so that I had a glimpse of high-heeled twinkling shoes, and began to run across the lawn towards the house. Her pupils had already scattered like startled birds.

I blame myself now for what I did. I had not liked the severe way in which this English lady had spoken to the fugitive in the tree, and I was still in that mood of jovial mischief to which I have alluded, but I am aware that there is little excuse for the course that I adopted. I got between Miss Ormiston and the house in a playfully threatening fashion, and then we began to play a quite exciting game of catch among the trees. I am sure you will accept my statement that I had not the least idea of hurting her, or even of frightening her unduly, but I can see now that she regarded me as some terrible ferocious demon. It hurts my slight natural pride a little to find in what a degree foolish



"We began to play quite an exciting game of catch among the trees."

strangers are shocked by my appearance. I cannot understand it in the least. No bear in the world could be more particular about his toilet than I.

For perhaps two minutes this harmless game went on, watched from the bushes and the house by many frightened, bright eyes, and then, just as we were both becoming a trifle blown, Miss Ormiston terminated it. Sheer desperation appeared to restore her coolness, and for the first time she seemed to remember the existence of a sort of summer-house that stood a few yards from the lawn. Many of her pupils had taken refuge within it, and now she outwitted me for the moment by a really clever feint, and then made a despairing rush towards its shelter. I let her go unpursued, and as the door slammed upon her I lay down panting slightly at the foot of the great tree.

For a few moments there was a kind of exhausted pause, and then Miss Barras broke the silence from her lofty branch.

"It seems a bear of *esprit*—a really charming bear," she remarked meditatively, with quite an appalling want of sympathy for the large lady. "'Ow are you, bear, and 'ow 'as dis cruelle world been treating you?"

No one has ever dared to say a word against my

manners. At her words I got up upon my hind legs, tired as I was, and made her a graceful bow. She gave a dainty little laugh of amused delight.

"I like you, bear," she said. "You came to 'elp me in the—in the ver' nick of time. I used to know well a bear like you, *mon ami*. But dat was a ver' long time ago, and in—in my dear France. And 'e was French—dat bear!"

I would have given anything in the world to have been able to tell her that I, too, was French, and that the very sound of her voice was as good as honeycomb to me. But, as it was, I could only bow again in my best style, and give a sort of stifled purring moan. We bears are dreadfully deficient in the language of affection. It was the very first time in my life that I had condescended to imitate or envy a wretched cat. She laughed again very gently as though she were pleased.

"I believe, I do believe dat *you* are French!" she cried softly. "No English bear would 'ave such darling manners. Oh, you dear ting, you must be French to please me! I am so starved and lonely in dis cold England!"

So *she* did not get enough to eat either! Perhaps *she* was only given sop and never anything nice and

sweet ! It seemed another bond between us. I was still looking up, and now I could see something shining upon her small, pale face. I made that queer sound again—it was all that I could do—and, as I live, she really understood what I was trying to express ! Ah, there was no doubt about *her* Frenchness either !

“You are a big darling,” she said. “And I—I am coming down to you. You will see dat dey are polite to me.”

She stood up upon the branch, and at that moment Miss Ormiston called shrilly through the window of the summer-house. I suppose she had been listening to our conversation. I’m afraid she was just the sort of person who would esteem it her duty to listen !

“Stay where you are, I command you, Miss Barras !” she screamed. “Are you mad that you talk of coming down to that wild thing !”

Miss Barras laughed with a sort of dainty scorn.

“No, I am not mad,” she said. “I know dat ’e will not ’urt me. ’E will see dat I do not fear ’im. But still I will stay ’ere, if you will promise dat I need not play de crickette or your oder barbarous English games.”

As she spoke I heard a step on the gravel, and Miss Ormiston gave a deep-throated cry of joy.

"I will not bargain with you, naughty child," she said sternly. "Our troubles are happily at an end. Here is Mr. Algernon, who will speedily eject this loathsome intruder! Mr. Algernon, Mr. Algernon, be good enough to chase this bear away!"

A man had entered the garden by the door that I had opened. He was a tall, rather fleshy man, with longish curly hair and eye-glasses. He wore a felt hat and a velvet coat, and he carried a black leather case in his hand. From Miss Ormiston's manner I gathered that he was in her employment and high in her regard.

He had stiffened at sight of me, and then he had glanced wildly around him. He appeared undecided between the door of the summer-house and the garden-gate. But I suppose he felt that a certain display of courage was almost inevitable. I did not like the man's looks, and I did not propose to brook his interference. But I lay quite still, and he came on a few cautious paces. Then suddenly I sprang up with a harsh growl, and made at him as though I fully intended business. In such trifles I am really a finished actor. Mr. Algernon gave a yelp—I can describe it by no other word—and it was answered by

a combined and heart-broken scream from behind the door of the summer-house. I gathered that they expected to see him devoured before their eyes, and they all seemed to cherish a romantic affection for the creature.

But Mr. Algernon himself had not the least intention of being devoured, if any active precaution on his part could prevent it. He hurled the black case at my head, and with the same movement made a most amazing leap for the branch of a small tree beneath which he stood. It was quite a high branch, and for a man of his figure the feat was astounding, but he reached it with his arms, and somehow drew himself up until he sat upon it. From the summer-house window came the agonised voice of Miss Ormiston.

"Tell me, some one, swiftly, what has happened! I have not the strength to look! Is our dear Mr. Algernon already mangled and devoured? Beg him to speak to me if he yet lives!"

Mr. Algernon's voice was a trifle brusque when he answered, although for some reason his teeth were clicking together quite sharply.

"Calm yourself, Miss Ormiston, I beg!" he said.
"I am for the moment in a position of comparative

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safety. But—but this branch is bending in the most da—infernal fashion !”

He was quite right, it was. I had noticed it myself. It was a fairly stout branch, but Mr. Algernon was a good deal stouter. It was asking too much of it to expect it to support a man of his weight. And those above were even slighter. I wandered to the foot of the tree and sat down there. (Mine is not a cruel nature, but I was still feeling in a mood for harmless fun.) And then I yawned in a casually expectant manner.

Miss Ormiston had apparently found strength to look for herself.

“He waits, with gloating, fiendish cruelty !” she said faintly. “Oh ! girls, girls, what have we done to deserve this dreadful trial ? Mr. Algernon, dear Mr. Algernon, I fear that your reckless chivalry has placed you in direful peril !”

“It has, madam, it has !” agreed Mr. Algernon savagely. “I am in no danger at the moment of forgetting it ! But I am striving at this dreadful hour to recall my Natural History studies. Is it not a fact that most bears can—climb ?”

There followed a long silence, broken only by the steady clicking of Mr. Algernon’s teeth. Then Miss Ormiston gulped audibly and spoke.



"He waits with gloating, fiendish cruelty."

"There are certain species that do not," she said; and even to me it was apparent that she was humanely concealing the truth. And then from behind her a small voice spoke up.

"*All* bears can climb!" it said quite eagerly. "It was in my punishment task the other day. There is some doubt about the grizzly, but the book seemed to think that even *that* can climb if it is actually necessary."

"Then that settles it," observed Mr. Algernon heavily. "I don't know whether this creature is a grizzly, but in any case it is probably only waiting to see if the branch will save it the trouble. Miss Ormiston and young ladies, I have done my best to save you, than which no man can do more, and I hope you will think of me kindly if—if this bear is contented with one victim."

There was a kind of admiring wail from the summer-house, and through it Miss Ormiston spoke with icy severity.

"Jane Smithers, if we live through this terrible experience, you will come to me for exemplary punishment," she said. "Was it for you to harrow the last moments of a hero by a wanton and probably inaccurate display of Natural History?"

I did not catch Miss Smithers' answer, because

at that moment what must have looked a rather terrible thing happened. The bough snapped with a rending crack, and Mr. Algernon fell heavily almost into my paws. I drew back, slightly startled, and Mr. Algernon, rebounding from the ground like an indiarubber ball, darted with surprising agility towards the summer-house. The door opened and closed upon him, and through the window I caught a glimpse of the man embraced by many arms.

"De poor Monsieur Algernon!" Miss Barras remarked with disdainful pity. "Dey tink 'im an 'ero and a gallant, and 'e is 'ardly a man, 'ardly a man, at all! You frightened 'im, *mon ami*, but still 'e is quite safe and 'appy now! And now I am coming down."

She began to climb slowly with dainty caution from branch to branch. As she reached the ground a sort of gasp came from the summer-house, but she did not hesitate. I was afraid to move lest I should startle her, but she did not seem to see the need for any fear. And that was one of the reasons why I loved her. She came and knelt down beside me upon the ground, and she took my right paw in her two hands. They were the tiniest hands that I have ever seen.

"You will not 'urt me, bear," she said softly. "You are French, like me (I *will* tink it), and you 'ate



"She came and knelt down beside me upon the ground."

England, like me, and people are unkind to you, like me, and you 'ave rebelled against dem, like me. You are like me in almost everyting, and dat is why we understand each other."

She was almost the one person who had ever been good to me, who had not been either afraid or brutal. It is queer and strange meeting a person like that, after so many others. But of course I could not tell her what I was thinking.

"Dey are not ver' good to me 'ere, *mon ami*," she said. "But it is only because dey are stupid and do not understand. I wished to be alone, and dey would force me to play de crickette. But I—I do not love de English crickette. And so I climb up into de tree away from dem, although indeed, bear, I am not a ver' good climber!"

She knelt in silence for a moment, and then she began to laugh with the quaintest, merriest mischief. She had as many moods as your English climate.

"You can 'elp me, if you will, bear," she said. "I will strike a bargain with dis big strong Mees Ormiston. Can you understand what I am saying? Will you walk with me from dis garden if I ask it?"

She had sprung to her feet, and I got up from the ground at once to show her that I understood. She

laughed again, and stroked my nose in a delightful fashion.

"Dat is good of you, *cheri*," she whispered, and then she raised her pretty voice. "Mees Ormiston, Mees Ormiston, can you 'ear me?" she cried.

"Yes, rash and naughty child, I can," Miss Ormiston answered. "Run swiftly to safety, before you are torn down or hugged!"

Miss Barras chuckled.

"'E will not tear me down, and I—I 'ave been 'ugging 'im!" she said. "'E is gentleman, true gentleman, dis good bear, and 'e will not 'urt any one so small as me. Also, 'e will do what I tell 'im, dis bear. I 'ave 'ad de honour to meet one before, to know 'im ver' well, and I understand dem. It is only de cowardly people 'oo are afraid of dem, like Monsieur Algernon, 'oom dey do not love."

A kind of moan came from the summer-house which I attributed to Mr. Algernon.

"'E will let me lead 'im from de garden—if I will!" Miss Barras continued sedately.

"Then do so instantly, rash child," Miss Ormiston commanded less harshly.

"But if I do, what will become of me? Will I be punished for climbing de tree? Will I be made to play

de crickette dat I do not love ? Or will it all be—what would you say—rubbed out ?”

“I cannot bargain with you, child,” madame said coldly.

“Ah, den, it is foolish, for 'oo knows 'ow long 'e must stay in de garden ? 'E may even go to sleep 'ere ver' soon ! And you—you must stay in de summer-house all de while. 'E is my one friend, dis bear.”

There was a pause, and then Miss Ormiston spoke in a different tone.

“Will you not trust me without a bargain, Adèle ? I—I have never meant to be unkind.”

She had strange ways, that small French lady. All in a moment her white cheeks flushed red.

“Ah ! yes, I will trust you, madame,” she cried eagerly. “And perhaps it shall go better between us after dis ! And now I will take my friend out into de road.”

She walked beside me with her hand upon my shoulder through the gate and down the lane, and as we went she laughed softly and delightfully.

“You 'ave 'elped me ver', ver' much, *cheri* !” she said. “I am small, and I am French, and I cannot play de crickette ; but it was I alone of dem all 'oo did not fear you. I tink dey will respect me after dis, and

it will be easier. But I wish 'ver much dat you could speak and tell me 'ow I could 'elp you !"

I could not speak to her, of course, and she could not help me, but I loved her voice and her touch upon my fur. It was very pleasant to walk beside her, but—I have never found that pleasant things last very long. We turned the corner, and there were two hateful figures advancing towards us that I knew too well. And I realised that my good time was over.

Both Charles and Henri were rather haggard-looking, and I think it probable that both were suffering from severe headaches. For some reason or other I had developed a very slight one myself. When my muzzle was on, Henri raised his stick in a very ugly manner, and it was then that the little lady addressed them for the first time. They had fancied, I think, that she was a stolid English child, and her swift anger and flashing eyes amazed them. She spoke to them at some length in fluent, biting French, as a great lady speaks to *canaille*, and apparently she had judged their characters to a nicety. It did me good to hear their faults described so unerringly and with such point. When she had ended, all the fight was out of my masters, and to clinch the point I rose upon my hind legs and made

it clear that I would stand no nonsense. And that settled the matter.

When she saw that better relations were established, Miss Barras patted me once, and then stood watching us as we went slowly down the road.

III

WHICH TELLS OF A FÊTE AND A BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE

IN the days following my last outing I was distinctly low and miserable. Henri and Charles watched me like ill-tempered cats, and appeared to consider that my desire for escape had been caused by gross over-feeding. The craving for whisky or similar fluids, to which I have alluded with real apprehension and regret, was very strong within me during those painful days, but its gratification appeared a wild, vain dream. But I am about to tell you how something of the sort *did* come my way, and how it betrayed me into one of the few indiscretions of a singularly beautiful and blameless life.

We were trudging along a lane in our usual way, when I saw a young male human coming towards us. He was a tall, strong-looking young man with queer, dark red hair, and I was rather attracted by his eyes

when he came close. They were dark grey, and they always looked as though he was laughing, although his face might be grave enough. It was grave enough then. I was pretty sick of everything, but I looked at him with a certain dull interest. He did not notice us until we were quite near, but when he did look up he started, and the worried look left his face. He went past very slowly, and then in a moment he turned and overtook us.

“And where might ye be bound for this fine mornin’, me friends?” he asked. He had a very pleasant soft accent, quite unlike the horrid English twang, and a knack of rolling his r’s that was almost French. I found afterwards that he was what is called an Irishman—and if he was a fair specimen, they must be quite an exciting race.

“We ’ave ’eard zat zare ees a poleetical *fête* zis afternoon in ze big park over yonder, monsieur,” Henri answered civilly. “We are going zare to see if zey ’ave ze good taste to welcome ze accomplished tricks of zis Joseph.”

The Irishman looked at me with a certain admiring interest, as I fancied, and he was half frowning and half smiling for some reason.

“I think ye’ll do pretty well at the park, me man,”

he said genially. "And what sort of a public artiste is Joseph ? Will he be fairly intelligent and obedient, or is he only a fool bear ?"

Henri glanced at me, and I could see what a pang it cost the churlish creature to praise me to my face.

"Zare ees not a bear to match 'im in zis England, monsieur !" he said quite truthfully.

"Then I suppose ye can make him do pretty well anythin' in reason ?" the Irishman asked, and I wondered what was the meaning of his questions. I am no fool, as you know, and he appeared to me to be aiming at something.

"I 'ave but to 'old up my leetle finger and 'e will obey me," Henri said with solemn untruth. "Eet ees partly because of ze great love 'e bears me, and partly because of zis stick zat I carry."

"Ah !" said the Irishman. "And don't worry much about the love, I suppose, if the stick is there ! Well, me friends, do ye want to be earnin' half a sovereign ?"

Both Henri and Charles explained with great fluency and feeling that they did. Their pawned earrings had been the last gold that they had handled.

"Well, it's like this," said the Irishman reflectively, "for reasons of me own I'm anxious to impress Sir

George Faulkner up at the park with a true sinse of me great courage and other virtues. The silly man has what ye may call a slight prejudice against meself, and an absurd obsession in favour of another gentleman. Now I'm thinkin' that that same gentleman might show to small advantage in the moment of peril. Are ye followin' me, me friends ? ”

“ *Mais oui, monsieur*, we fully understand ! ”

“ That's good ! ” he said cheerfully. “ Well, this is where you and our friend Joseph come in. You go up to the park this afternoon, and durin' the performance before Sir George and all the good people Joseph quite suddenly turns savage. Do ye think that could be managed, me friend ? ”

“ *Mais oui, monsieur*, it could be managed,” said Henri, glancing at that hateful stick of his.

“ There is a scene of terror and confusion,” the Irishman continued solemnly. “ Women scream, men—especially one man—look hastily for shelter, even the trainers of the desperate animal are temporarily dismayed. Only one man in all the throng is cool and brave. His name is Terence Shamus Adair, which happens to be me own honoured name. This man, this hero as I will venture to call him, catches up the trainer's stick, and with it reduces the wild baste

to obedience as by a miracle of courage ! And ye say that all this could be guaranteed for half a sovereign, me man ? ”

“ Not perhaps wiz certainty, monsieur,” Henri said slowly. “ But for a sovereign I zink eet would be quite, quite sure ! ”

Mr. Adair laughed with huge and rather catching merriment.

“ I’m no Cræsus,” he said, “ but I’m not the man to stick at a beggarly ten shillings. Shall we say that it’s a deal for a sovereign ? Ah ! by Jove ! by Jove ! ” His voice had altered suddenly and queerly. A dog-cart was coming down the lane driven by a girl. She had lovely fair hair, and a charming, soft-coloured sort of face. She bowed as she flashed past, and I noticed that her cob began to walk in a few hundred yards. Mr. Adair noticed it too. It would have been queer if he had not done so, considering how he was staring after her.

“ Then ye’ll be at the park about four ? ” he added hastily to Henri. “ I shall be looking out for you, and we’ll manage to make our arrangements. I must get on now.”

I think that Henri, obeying his base natural instincts, would have asked for something on account,

but there was no time to do so. Mr. Adair had turned and was striding away. Henri shrugged his shoulders, and said something to Charles about "zese dam mad Eenglish," and then they sat down and smoked and lunched leisurely before we made for the park. The thought of that sovereign must have softened even Henri, for upon this occasion I also was a luncher.

The park was simply crowded with humans. We went through the big iron gates, and some instinct guided Henri towards some large tents that showed among the trees. I afterwards discovered that they were for eating and drinking purposes. No one spoke to us until we were nearly up to them, and then Mr. Adair appeared apparently from nowhere.

"Come this way," he said, and he led us unostentatiously through the trees to a shed behind the tents.

"Ye'd better tie the baste in here for a bit," he said. "I don't want to seem to have much connection with you, but I've made it right for your appearance with Mr. Wilcox, the agent. Ye'll come on in about half an hour, after Mr. Horace Limpner has finished saying a few words to the simple villagers about 'Coolness and Presence of Mind.' He's the gentleman I told you about, and he's great on thim two qualities. Well, maybe we're goin' to test his to-day."

They chained me in a dark corner of the shed, and then Mr. Adair mentioned casually to my masters that Sir George, out of pure political enthusiasm he said, was supplying all visitors with free refreshments. They took the hint instantly and vanished, and for about five minutes that Irishman stood watching me reflectively. Then there was a light step outside, and some one swished into the shed. It was the fair-haired girl.

Mr. Adair took one quick step towards her, and then hesitated.

"It's—it's very good of ye to see me here, Miss Faulkner," he said quietly.

"Why do you call me 'Miss Faulkner?'" she asked, and her voice was like her face. I can't think at the moment of any higher praise.

"Simply because I'm just nothing but a poor divil with grand expectations, but barely enough to live on at the moment, whom your father doesn't think worthy to call you anythin' else. And because—because he wants a certain wealthy Mr. Horace Limpner to have the sole right to call you—names!"

The girl laughed with a delightful kind of gentle mischief.

"Ah! but, Terry, Terry, you didn't call me Miss

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Faulkner this morning," she said. "You called me quite a number of 'names,' but not that. Have you forgotten already? I know that you wild Irishmen have terribly short memories!"

"Forgotten!" said Mr. Adair scornfully. "Whilst I can remember I shall not be forgettin'—this mornin'!"

At which the girl laughed again.

"You are certainly Irish!" she said. "But I don't know that I actually dislike the Irish! What did you want to say, Terry, for I daren't stay long?"

"I'm ashamed of what I said this mornin'," the Irishman answered. "I'm tryin' to behave meself now with cold propriety, but ye won't let me, Barbara, darlin'. I've been thinkin' that perhaps ye'd be happier with Mr. Horace Limpner than with—any wild Irishman."

Miss Faulkner half turned away.

"I'm not quite sure that I like the Irish habit of fishing for compliments," she remarked reflectively. "So I decline to draw comparisons between Mr. Limpner and—any one else. And if you merely want to talk about *him* I must go away at once. I happen to detest him—as a subject of conversation."

Mr. Adair caught at her hands.

"Ah ! me darlin', I only wanted to be sure that ye *did* detest him !" he said earnestly. "If ye do, all's well. And I can tell ye of my highly ingenious scheme."

And he told her in a few words of his plan. When he had finished Miss Faulkner began to laugh, as though against her will.

"It's altogether wrong, and you mustn't think of it," she said through her laughter. "And now I *must* get back. Father will be wondering what has become of me."

"I'll not forget that you've forbidden it, Barbara," he said, and then the girl vanished through the door, and after a minute or two he also left the shed. I lay there quietly, reflecting upon the curious ways of humans.

Very soon I heard other steps, and thought that Henri and Charles were coming back. But the two men who entered were strangers to me, and rather quaintly dressed, all in black with long coat-tails and a lot of rather dingy white shirt showing in front. One of them carried a large round bottle in his hands.

"Make 'aste, and get the cork out, before any one comes along !" the other one said. "I'm panting to get my old dry beak into something good and wet."

I realised that these men had stolen something. And also that what they had stolen was of an intoxicating nature. Humans do not make such a fuss about any other sort of liquid. I felt quite a righteous glow as I determined at any cost to secure that stolen property. Also, that craving, which is such a cause of shamed regret to me, had risen up strong and fierce in my heart. I must and would get hold of that big round gilt bottle.

They had not noticed me in the dark, and they were within reach of my chain. Suddenly I darted forward with a growl, and by a deft movement twitched the bottle from the men's hands into my own paws. It slipped from them to the ground, but, thank goodness, it was not broken. The man who held it sprang through the door with one dreadful howl of terror; the other appeared to dive head first through it in the most reckless way. Personally I was glad to turn to more congenial matters.

But I had rather a shock. I got my claws into the cork and twisted, and instantly there was a snake-like hiss, and a little devil that had been confined in the bottle came leaping out, and hit me full in the face. I was half-blinded, and my eyes were tingling. I was startled for the moment, but soon my natural courage

asserted itself. I tilted the bottle rather timidly through my muzzle and into my mouth.

There are some things in this life, only a few, that are too good to be talked about. The fluid in that bottle was one of them. It hurts me to think that it may be long before any more comes my way. I will only record that it was better than whisky. I finished it to the last drop, and then lay down, conscious only of a kind of vague, misty happiness that I had never known before.

I was still like that when Henri and Charles came for me. Indeed, when they led me out into the open air that joyous feeling seemed to grow stronger. I appeared to be walking on air, just a trifle unsteadily. Henri and Charles looked at me rather curiously, but I did not resent it. At that moment I had nothing but a vague, tolerant affection for them. This will give you some idea of my mood. We came into the open park, to where a great crowd of people were gathered in a circle. In their centre stood a little podgy man in spectacles, who seemed to be finishing a speech. I have seldom seen a human who appeared to be enjoying himself more fully. We were in time to hear his last sentence.

"And so, my friends," he said, "I will conclude

these few remarks by adjuring you one and all—the sturdy father, the comely mother, and the bright child—to show in the moment of peril that coolness and that dauntless courage which are our birthright, which can come with care and constant practice even to the weakest, and which have lifted our England to her proud position among the nations of the world !”

There was a thin, dutiful burst of applause (very different from the sort that I evoke at my best), and then a tall, lean gentleman in gaiters, whom I afterwards learned to be Sir George himself, stepped into the ring.

“ I will ask you, my friends,” he said, “ to give three cheers for Mr. Horace Limpner, as a mark of our gratitude for his most interesting and inspiring address.”

Whilst the cheers were being given, Mr. Limpner twisted his small body about, and tried to look modest and manly and dauntless all at the same time. I was conscious of a sudden but very strong dislike for the little self-satisfied man. Also I remembered that this was the individual who was preferred as a son-in-law to my red-haired Irishman, who was a cause of annoyance to Miss Barbara Faulkner. Something, it may have been partly the lawless little devil that had been confined in

the bottle, made me feel sure that it was necessary for me to punish Mr. Horace Limpner.

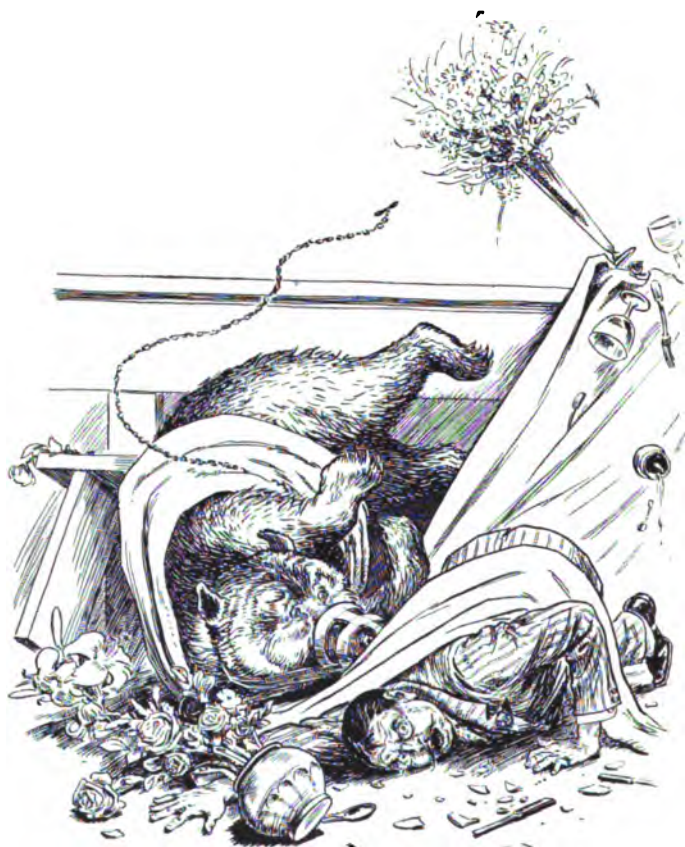
Mr. Horace Limpner stopped bowing at last, regretfully, and walked to where Sir George was standing with his daughter and a few other well-dressed people at the thinnest part of the circle. I caught sight of Mr. Adair not far away, as I was led forward amid a general hum of applause. I think the people fancied that I might quite easily be more amusing than Mr. Limpner. I do not know what steps Henri would have taken to earn that sovereign by making me simulate ferocity, although I fancy that the stick would have played an important part in them, because I did not wait for the man to act. As we reached the centre of the ring I twitched the chain from his grasp, and with a kind of roar of fury ran straight at Mr. Horace Limpner.

He must have felt my small, but very intelligent, red eyes upon him. He must have realised that I had singled him alone out of all that crowd as my personal foe. At any rate, he did not wait to learn my intentions, nor did he elect to give a display of that courage and coolness about which he had been talking. He gave a sort of hissing wail and took to his heels with really amazing speed for so small and plump a

man. But I, too, was speedy, for the stuff in the bottle gave me the feeling that I could run for ever, and was filling me now with a kind of joyous mischief. I heard two shocking expressions from Charles and Henri, an excited whoop from Mr. Adair, and then I flashed past Sir George and his daughter into the open, and a chase began that will always be a very pleasing memory to me.

I know now that Mr. Adair caught Henri's stick from his hand, and at once headed the pursuit, but I did not know it then. There must have been a hundred people straining and panting behind me, but I was only conscious of my small, fat, squealing quarry. He ran like a hare, dodging, twisting, doubling, but I was hard upon his heels. I did not consider what I should do if I caught the man, but I wanted that chase to last. Its excitement had got into my head, together with the liquid from the bottle, and I was deliciously young and mad for those few moments.

He dodged round trees, but my graceful agility was surprising even myself ; he flew round a Punch and Judy show, but I sent it spinning, and stuck to him like wax ; then he gathered his strength and ran, screaming shrilly, straight for the largest tent. I was three desperate yards behind him as he gained the



"The long, white table-cloth had contrived to wrap itself round us both in the most maddening fashion."

doorway, and I had a vision of a long white table covered with glass and silver. Mr. Limpner cleared it with a single bound like a trained acrobat, but tripped and fell heavily on the other side. I tried to equal or surpass his leap, but either my foot or the chain caught in the cloth, and I shall never know exactly what happened next. I only know that Mr. Limpner and I were rolling on the floor within a few feet of each other, amid a crash of breaking glass ; that Mr. Limpner's screams were agonising enough to touch the hardest heart ; and that the long white table-cloth had contrived to wrap itself round us both in the most maddening fashion. Mr. Limpner got clear first, and beat or cut his way through the side of the tent, like a circus rider through a hoop, and I fought free and followed him, just as our pursuers poured through the door.

We were off again at full speed, but, alas ! few cheerful things last long in this dull world. Mr. Limpner was running straight now and silently, too breathless to scream or dodge. I think that he had become quite desperate, and was running without hope or plan. I also was growing more than a trifle blown, but I was scarcely prepared for the rapid and startling termination of the chase. I saw the gleam of water, and then a round pond appeared before us, but

it did not turn Mr. Limpner. He hurled himself straight in, splashing forward until the muddy water reached above his neck, and then, when it was gurgling about his lips, he stopped. It appeared that he could not swim. Personally I do not care greatly for water, and the glow of the chase and of that fizzy stuff were dying out of me rapidly. So I lay down upon the bank, and sneered solemnly and offensively at Mr. Horace Limpner.

Apparently the glow of the chase had died out of my pursuers also, for when I stopped they all pulled up too, about forty yards away. All, that is, except Mr. Adair. He must have been pretty plucky for a human, for he could not have known that I was not really dangerous, and that I had by now grown almost ashamed of my violence. He came up and threatened me with the stick and caught the chain in his hand.

I turned over on my back to show that I surrendered.

"It's all right now, Sir George!" Mr. Adair shouted cheerily. "The poor baste is conquered intirely!"

Then he turned to the little gentleman in the water.

"Ye can come out now, Mr. Limpner," he said seriously. "I'm afraid ye will be risking a nasty chill after your late exertions."

Mr. Limpner did not answer in words, but he waved

with his hand. He seemed to indicate that I must be led away before he could think seriously of coming out.

Sir George came up to us at that moment, with Henri and Charles at his heels.

Henri was very angry and would have been violent, but my dear red-haired Irishman checked him at once.

Sir George himself appeared annoyed. I suppose he had not liked the dining-tent being a little disordered.

"I really think you can come out now without serious danger, Mr. Limpner," he said coldly, and Mr. Limpner found courage to obey him. He was rather a distressing sight. His clothes were in a dreadful state, and there was a good deal of wet mud on his face and hair.

Sir George turned from him to Henri.

"You can remove yourselves and your bear from this park at once," he said sternly. "He is a perfect menace to the public safety!"

"If ye like, Sir George, I will see them outside the gates," said the Irishman respectfully.

"I shall be very grateful if you will do so, Mr. Adair," Sir George answered, and his tone was very different from that in which he had addressed the unfortunate Mr. Limpner.

So the four of us walked silently away towards the gates. But when we were out of sight beyond the trees, Mr. Adair took a sovereign from his pocket and handed it to Henri.

"I'm much obliged to ye," he said, "and I hope ye'll see that the bear has a good meal. He rather exceeded the scope of my scheme, perhaps, but—I'm hopin' for the best."

Henri spoke untruthfully and at some length in answer, and then we heard some one running behind us. It was Miss Faulkner.

"I felt that I *must* just pat that poor wicked darling of a bear," she said, and she did so very nicely. "It was all very wrong and dreadful, Terry, but—I think he's been a good friend to us."

"What's happened, darlin'?" Mr. Adair asked eagerly.

"Oh! I heard father say to poor Mr. Limpner that only one man of the lot had behaved as he would have done himself twenty years ago, and that that man was *you*, Terry! And—and he sent me after you to say that he would be very glad to see you at dinner to-night."

"Hurroo!" shouted Mr. Adair ecstatically. "We've won the day! Barbara, me darlin', ye'll not be runnin' down Irish plans and Irish brains again!"



"Mr. Limpner did not answer in words, but he waved with his hand."

[See Page 58.]

"I don't think I like you very much when you're vain, Terry," said Miss Faulkner sedately. "Besides—you're not the real hero of the day at all!"

And she bent down and patted me again.

But, without going in for mock modesty, which I detest, I am inclined to think that they owed even more to that bottle of fizzy liquid than to me.

IV

IN WHICH HE MAKES A STARTLING ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE GREAT GAME OF GOLF

THIS strange and terrifying experience began, in a way, with that sovereign which the red-haired Irishman had paid for my brilliant services. There was no frugality or thought for the morrow about Henri or Charles. Having money, they must spend it—upon rich foods and liquor. Nor was there any gratitude. I had earned the money, but I was a “vile, treacherous pig,” to be fed upon insipid sop!

So, behold us that summer evening, lodged in a barn—absolutely without the consent of the owner. We were somewhere near the sea, with the idea of reaping a rich harvest from the people on the sands. My masters had eaten grossly, and now were drinking whisky in quite startling quantities.

I watched them rather nervously. If the liquor

should deaden their prudence before it sent them to sleep, there was no knowing to what lengths their cruelty might carry them. Henri is by nature a dull man intellectually, even for a human; but I could imagine him showing some little ingenuity in the invention of new tortures. It is the man's *métier*, as you might say. As for Charles—well, I can hardly trust myself to speak to you about Charles. I heard an excited person on the sands talking about a “lost soul” the other day. The man Charles is a lost soul. Anyway, I prepared myself for the worst.

Henri and Charles were both smoking as they drank. I detest tobacco, but I am sure that it is not tobacco that they smoke. Worse than that—much worse! Judging by the smell, it is dried seaweed soaked in something dreadful. Charles has gathered from my manner that I hate even tobacco. So it has always been his favourite amusement to puff his abominable smoke through my muzzle. It has occurred to me several times that he will one day be hugged for this.

Upon this occasion, when he prepared to repeat the performance, Henri made a suggestion.

“Zat ees well enough, and ver’ amusing,” he remarked with thoughtful solemnity. “But eet would

be more brave to remove ze muzzle first. Besides, eet would give ze smoke more chance."

"Zare ees little bravery needed," Charles returned scornfully. "I do not fear any bear in ze world !"

"Zen take eet off," Henri remarked.

"Be'old me, I do not 'esitate !" Charles exclaimed dramatically, and he unstrapped the muzzle and laid it down.

I shook myself a little, and felt the hair begin to bristle down my back. That always means business with me, and I am amazed that even my bemused masters did not notice it.

Henri came close up to enjoy the fun, laughing hatefully, and Charles bent down to perform his pleasing task. But as his lips opened to eject the smoke I struck at him with my right paw, a good swinging blow with most of my weight in it. If that blow had gone fully home, I should have undoubtedly had the stain of French and inhuman blood on my paws. It would have crumpled the man Charles like an egg-shell. But the light was bad, some of the smoke had got into my eyes, and I was too close for my blow to do much real harm. It just knocked the pair of them head over heels to the other side of the

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barn, and their fall put out the candle-end that was our only light. And this latter fact, I am half ashamed to own, most probably saved my masters' lives.

For I was half mad with anger for the moment, and if I could have got at them I should have undoubtedly tried to finish them off. As it was, I rampaged round the barn like a maniac, looking for them in all directions and too excited to be able to find them in the half light. Two minutes must have passed before I understood the meaning of the terrific rustling that I had heard.

Henri and Charles in their panic had crawled to the straw, and piled it thickly above them. I had noticed the great heap in my mad search, but it had never occurred to me that they were underneath it. Now Henri's muffled voice came forth from its very heart. The whisky and the fright and the fall must have half dazed the man, for he was speaking quite foolishly.

"Joseph, I command zat you lie down and weep!" he said. "Weep, weep, zen, for your treatment of ze loved master, of 'oom you are so unworthy! I also am weeping as I lie 'ere beneath ze choking straw. Eet ees right and fitting zat we should mingle our tears. Eef you weep and repent sufficiently, eet ees

possible zat your chastisement may be less severe when I come forth."

"*Taisez-vous*, foolish ape!" I heard Charles hiss. "Eef 'e 'ears you 'e ees quite capable of removing ze straw from above us."

"Would zat 'e would," Henri said mournfully. "I suffocate, I choke! But eef 'e 'ears my well-loved voice eet will restore 'im to 'is senses. For 'e loves me, zis poor Joseph loves me. Eet ees my fate to be loved by all, especially by ze poor women. Eet ees you against 'oom 'e 'as a certain, not unnatural, prejudice."

"Eef you are not silent, imbecile," Charles growled, "I will transfix you with my knife! At any moment zis mad *sacré* bear may be upon us."

I had been reflecting as I listened, and I recognised that the certainty of escape was better than the chance of revenge. I had never known Henri in this maudlin mood before, and he certainly did not seem dangerous, but the shock appeared to have sobered the man Charles. I did not like the idea of his knife, and violence is curiously difficult when one has been in the habit of obeying a man. Custom is horribly apt to reassert itself. You know me too well by now to doubt my courage; but, influenced by a variety of weighty reasons, I walked noiselessly

to the door of the barn. Outside it, I paused and listened.

"What 'appens?" I heard Henri ask timidly.

"I zink zat 'e 'as left ze barn," Charles answered crossly. "But eet may well be zat 'e ees only 'iding to leap out upon us eef we emerge."

Henri groaned piteously, and there was a short silence before he spoke again.

"I must 'ave air," he said at last. "I can endure zis 'ateful straw no more. I will go forth, and Joseph shall abase 'imself before me."

The straw rustled, and I judged it well to interfere. I growled raucously, and instantly there was silence in the barn, a silence only broken by a faint but heartfelt whisper from Charles. I waited for a moment, and then stole silently away.

When I was out of earshot I took to my heels. The moon was up, but I was unused to night travel, and I did not try to go very far. I suppose I covered three or four miles at a slinging trot, and then I turned in at a wooden gate, and lay down in the heart of some thick bushes. It was the first cover that I had met, and I availed myself of it, although a house was perilously near. I was very leg-weary, and I fell asleep at once.

I am naturally a heavy sleeper, and upon that occasion I overslept myself. I had meant to be afoot before the humans in the house were stirring, but as it was I did not wake until the sun was pretty high. I peered out, when I had stretched myself, and discovered to my horror that a male human was walking up and down upon the lawn in front of my bushes.

He was a very tall, lean, untidy man, and he had a great hooked nose, upon which was perched a pair of spectacles, uncouthly mended with string. He was smoking an immense pipe, and as he walked he appeared to be muttering sheer gibberish to himself. Altogether, something about the man gave me the impression of a certain vague eccentricity. I know now that this impression was sadly inadequate.

As I watched him nervously, two girl humans came out of the house before which he was walking. They were rather pleasant-looking children, and each of them had her hair in a short thick braid upon her shoulders. They were laughing as they came up to the tall man.

"I betted Ethel sixpence just now that you've clean forgotten your engagement for this morning, uncle," one of them said.

"Then you have lost, Miranda," said the tall man,

with just a touch of severity. "I have done nothing of the sort. I have pledged myself to finish a most important chapter of my history this morning. That is my only engagement, and I am thinking it out now."

"I should have won," Miranda said regretfully, "but Ethel refused to take the bet. In fact, she wanted to make it herself! And we were both right, because you *have* forgotten, Professor!"

The tall human ran his hands wildly through his already untidy hair.

"Tell me, wicked child, what it is!" he demanded. "Do not dare to torture an aged and niece-worn uncle!"

Ethel giggled.

"Do you *ever* remember *anything*, uncle?" she asked innocently—"except those horrid dates," she added as an afterthought.

"I am methodical to a fault, child," the Professor retorted indignantly. "It is my constant habit to enter in a special notebook every duty and engagement for the forthcoming week."

"Yes, uncle, you do," Miranda agreed. "And then you lose the special notebook!"

He strode wildly up and down the lawn waving his great hands.



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"For a moment the Professor glared at them wildly."

"Do not goad Gulliver any longer, you Lilliputian demons!" he said. (The language of you humans is often quite meaningless to me. I have sometimes thought that you are puzzled by it yourselves.) "Tell me, I pray, what I am pledged to do this morning."

"You promised to play Major Helbin eighteen holes at golf. You know that you did, uncle," said Miranda accusingly.

"And if you back out or forget, he will be quite sure to say that you funked it," added Ethel severely.

For a moment the Professor glared at them wildly through his glasses. Then he smacked his great hands together with quite a startling crack. "It has come back to me," he cried. "Back out of it, indeed! You wrong your uncle cruelly by the suggestion. This man of war has dared to say that I cannot turn my thoughts from the Icenî for the space of time required for eighteen holes. Ha! ha! I shall prove him wrong this very day, thrusting his wanton words far down his throat!"

Personally, I had already decided that this man was a lunatic—possibly a dangerous one. That remained to be proved—as it was in a very terrible fashion. But these female children appeared to find him quite normal. It is wonderful what you can get used to!

"That's all very well, uncle," Miranda said. "But you know quite well that if we don't go round with you, you will begin thinking about those people with queer names. We can't trust you a bit!"

"Then come round with me!" the Professor retorted severely. "I hasten now to gird myself for the combat, not forgetting boots with spikes, and the ill-adapted weapons of the chase!"

"He means his clubs!" Miranda remarked rather despairingly, as the Professor disappeared into the house at a shambling run. "He can't play a bit, of course, but—neither can the Major. And *he* thinks he can."

When they also had vanished, I glided from the bushes and trotted down the road. I felt that that garden was no place for me. I did not wish in the least to encounter the mad Professor when he was equipped with his spiked boots and his "weapons of the chase." Ordinary boots can inflict a sufficiently painful wound, and as for his "clubs," whatever they might be, I felt that I had had enough experience of sticks to last any one a lifetime! But, alas! I was destined to meet that curious man again. Very soon I came to a wild stretch of country, all coarse grass and rolling sandhills. It did not look the sort of

place where there would be many humans, and so I left the road and lay down in a kind of long trench in the sand to think over my plans. I was dreadfully hungry as usual, but the sun was warm, and in a little while I dozed off. . . . I was awakened by a small white ball with black gashes on it plumping into the trench beside me, and by hearing a human vociferate fervently in the distance.

"Well, may I be canonised!" this human moaned. "So far you've crawled or bounced over six bunkers, Professor, and *I've* found every one! Your luck is simply atrocious!"

"Do not dare to call it luck, Major!" said a voice that I recognised. "For my part I refer to it as science!"

I peeped over the edge of the long hole, and saw that the Professor and a plump, red-faced, upright man were coming straight for me, followed by the two girls. It was a moment that would have unnerved most animals, but at such times I am at my best. I crawled along the trench to where the long, coarse grass began, and plunged right into it. There I lay down, and unnoticed by the humans watched all that passed.

Now let me say at once that lunacy, actual lunacy,

is to my mind the only explanation of the weird proceedings that I witnessed that morning. If there is any other, it is beyond even my intelligence. I can only tell you what I saw, and, with certain very necessary eliminations, what I heard. I consider that the record speaks for itself.

"Science!" remarked the red-faced man fiercely, as he came up to the hole in the sand. "Nothing but the presence of your nieces prevents me from giving you frankly and fully my opinion of your science!"

The Professor gave a high annoying laugh, and the Major climbed down into the long trench and drew a curious weapon from the brown bag that he carried. With this instrument he struck furiously several times at the small white ball, but without apparent result. The sand flew, and one or two more gashes may have appeared upon the ball, but that was all that happened. It is true, of course, that I did not know his object in striking at the thing. It looked to me like mere wanton, destructive rage. The Professor was seated some yards away, watching these matters with a kindly indulgent smile upon his long, spectacled face. After the sixth blow the Major picked up the ball, hurled it over the high bank before him, and muttered some-

thing to himself. The girls, with rare tact, as I now perceived, had wandered a little distance away.

"The hole being abandoned, I am now three up!" the Professor chanted with a kind of triumphant precision, but with a total lack of meaning so far as I was concerned. "Without wishing to add to your annoyance or to interfere with your rather heathenish utterances, Major, it is yet my duty as an uncle to inform you that my nieces are almost within earshot!"

The Major choked.

"As a class, sir, let me inform you that I abominate *all* uncles!" he said thickly. "And individually I find them even more offensive! With regard to your nieces, I must say that they are a distinct handicap and hindrance to me!"

"That may be, Major," said the Professor, totally unmoved. "But I must point out that they are necessary to my game. Also I cannot doubt that your undisciplined moral nature will benefit by the restraint of their presence!"

The Major choked again and made a kind of dumb gesture with his hands, and stalked on. The Professor, with another irritating laugh, followed him.

Well, these doings were quite inexplicable to me,

even with my experience of human folly, but somehow I felt I must see more of them. I forgot my hunger and everything else in my curiosity. These humans were walking on a narrow strip of beautiful turf, and I kept level with them, slinking along among the long grass and the sandhills. They came in a little while to a small grassy mound with a square white box upon it. They all mounted this plateau, and there the Professor continued these extraordinary manoeuvres. He took sand from the box and made a neat little hill with it, and poised a ball on the top. Then he drew a formidable-looking stick from his bag, and addressed the Major with a winning smile.

"Three up, I think, Major," he said pleasantly.

"Three up, you have already said!" snapped the red-faced man.

"Ah!" said the Professor with admirable good nature, "I am so dreadfully forgetful and absent-minded, as my dear nieces will tell you. Good heavens! what was that!"

"What was what?" asked the Major nervously.

"I—I could have sworn that I saw—something—in that long grass," the Professor said in a rather trembling voice. "But it was probably one of the more distressing symptoms of acute indigestion, to which

painful malady I am sadly prone. Yes, yes, it was certainly that. *I will think it was that!*"

He had looked full at me, and my heart had been in my mouth for a moment. But I had instantly, with rare presence of mind, crouched completely out of sight.

"I should drive, Professor," the Major said sympathetically. "It may divert your mind. Although some say that these objects vanish if looked at steadily. Uncharitable people might find another explanation for your symptoms ; but for my part I put them down merely to overwork."

The Professor did not answer this remark. I was lying flat, and so was unable to see what he was doing. But I heard a swish and a heavy thud, and then I ventured to peer through the grass. The white ball was still upon the plateau, and the Professor appeared to be contemplating gloomily an upheaval in the turf immediately behind it. I do not pretend to explain these things ; I merely record them.

"One!" counted the Major solemnly. "You must have another, Professor!"

The Professor glanced at him through his spectacles, and again he did not speak. He selected another weapon, and niggled with it in a curious way. Then

he whirled it round his head, and it appeared to me that the upheaval in the turf grew more pronounced. The ball was unmoved by his violence.

"Two!" counted the Major again.

The Professor turned to him and spoke in a curious strained sort of voice.

"I should be obliged, Major Helbin, by your counting in silence for the future, if you *must* have the bad taste to count!" he said.

"Certainly, Professor!" answered the red-faced man very cheerily. "But we are both of us very absent-minded and forgetful!"

The Professor gave a kind of gasp, and turned again to his task, after one nervous, shrinking glance in my direction. This time he did not nigger at all. He just struck at the ball with his full strength, and both his feet appeared to leave the ground as he did so. It was the sort of blow, I should imagine, that takes a great deal of practice before such substantial results can be attained as were now apparent. It is true that the ball did not move, but I cannot be sure that it was intended to do so. There was, however, a rending crack, and when the dust cleared I could see that the Professor's weapon was in two separate pieces.

I saw the Major's lips move silently as if he were

counting, and then I turned my attention to the Professor. That tall, thin man was striding furiously round and round the little plateau, and he was screaming, yes, screaming, words and expressions in an apparently foreign tongue. Both the Major and I seemed to read them in the same way, and, as it appeared, unjustly.

"I am not an uncle, Professor," the Major remarked mildly, "but it is my duty as a gentleman, and, I hope, a Christian, to point out to you that your nieces are within earshot. Not that I wish in any way to aggravate your very natural sufferings!"

The Professor turned upon him like a maniac.

"Your remarks are impertinent, sir!" he thundered. "I was merely quoting from the Koran, which I have always found an invaluable sedative in moments of excitement. I repudiate your suggestion of blasphemy with scorn!"

"In that case I must apologise," observed the Major solemnly. "My suggestion was well meant. I only feared that you might break out into English. I was not to know that it was the Koran, and it sounded bad enough for anything. That point being settled, would you mind playing your fourth shot, Professor?"

The Professor kicked the ball from the plateau and shouldered his bag.

"You are now two down," he stated cryptically, and the procession moved on again.

I pass briefly over the next half hour. In that space of time the Major and the Professor appeared to pass alternatively through every phase of impotent rage and passion. Whilst one of them was in this mood the other was always proportionately gleeful. It would have been a degrading spectacle for any one with a high opinion of humans. I confess that I was cynically interested, although rendered slightly nervous by their violence. I had in fact grown a little incautious in my eagerness to miss nothing, and once or twice I could almost have sworn that the Major, glancing wildly around him, had spotted me. But he seemed naturally a fluent, verbose talker, and I felt sure that, if he had done so, he would have mentioned it.

They came in time to a beautiful little lawn among the sandhills with a small tin flag-staff in the middle of it. I crawled to the very edge, and crouched behind a bank to watch. The Professor was speaking. To do him justice, he generally was. .

"My putt, I think, Major," he remarked morosely. "I am still, if I mistake not, one up?" he added more cheerfully.

"You are!" snapped the Major, who was lifting the

flag out of the hole, in order, as I fancy, to use it as a weapon. "But, thank goodness, you are playing two more now. Please, please do not let us have another of your ghastly, atrocious flukes!"

"The word fluke is a confession of impotent jealousy," observed the Professor complacently, and taking an instrument from his bag he tapped his ball, and it rolled some thirty feet, to disappear in the hole where the flag had been. The fact of this happening made me feel sure, ignorant as I was, that the Professor could not have wished it to happen.

But I was wrong for once. A kind of choking groan made me look anxiously towards the Major. I feared for the moment either that he had caught sight of me, or else that he had had a species of seizure. He had dropped upon his knees, and was waving his clenched hands in the air. The only sound that proceeded from his lips was a thick, unintelligible gobble. For the sake of those girl humans I was glad of this.

The Professor strode towards him with a kindly cheery smile upon his gaunt face.

"Come, come, Major, you must not give way like this!" he said affectionately. "Certainly my putting

F

is very brilliant to-day, but yours may yet improve——"

He would have laid his hand upon the other's shoulder, but the Major sprang to his feet.

"Do not dare to touch or address me, sir!" he snarled. "I can hardly trust myself to remain near you! Kindly let me have comparative silence for my putt!"

The Professor's smile broadened indulgently, and he drew back. The Major braced himself as for a gigantic task, but when upon the point of tapping the ball he straightened himself suddenly.

"Some one moved!" he said with concentrated ferocity.

"Nobody stirred," the Professor answered genially. "But if you would prefer it, Major, I and my nieces will stretch ourselves face downwards upon the ground!"

The Major crouched again. The tension even for me was hideous. I declare solemnly that I never knew what those two would do next. Then, just as it seemed that he *must* hit the ball, he sprang erect and looked full into my face! In my excitement I had raised myself above the bank. For a moment we glared at each other, and then the red-faced man spoke with a kind of forced calm.

"It may be a hideous optical delusion," he said hoarsely, "but I am inclined myself to recognise the hand of a malicious Fate. The gods are not content with holing your putts at all ranges, Professor, but they must send a bear—a *bear*—to put *me* off mine! I have been seeing it most of the morning, and had settled in any case to consult a medical man or a clergyman, but there it is again at the edge of the green!"

They were all looking at me now, and the girls were screaming. I was as one chained.

"It *is* a bear!" said the Professor with a kind of solemn gratitude. "Major, I forgive you everything, since you also have seen the creature. We are returned, it seems, to the brave old days when the bear and wolf roamed the wild virgin land. I feel the spirit of the Iceni stirring in my veins! Follow me, Major, in a noble chase that shall recall the days before the Romans came!"

He drew a short thick weapon, which I had seen him use in trenches, from his bag and sprang towards me. The Major, with a raucous yell, followed his example. I did not await their onslaught, for, mercifully, the use of my limbs came back to me. With a snort of terror, yes, I confess it, of terror, I turned and fled away among the sandhills.

Only a coward says he is never afraid. I can afford to admit that I was badly frightened by those two. It was their insanity that scared me. I had guessed it, of course, from the Professor's conversation, and from what I had seen of their actions all that morning, but I had hoped against hope that they were not dangerous. Now they had proved that they *were*, beyond a doubt, and, although my heart bled for those two defenceless girls, I had to think of my own safety.

They followed me with strange mad cries. The Professor, in particular, was whooping in some strange foreign tongue. Not for worlds would I have come within reach of that tall, spectacled lunatic, who flew after me waving his strange weapon in the air. He had filled me with nervous apprehension from the first, and now my panic seemed to lend me wings. Over the sandhills and the turf I hurtled, until, panting and almost exhausted, I gained the level road. But my pursuers were still hard upon me, and I tore down it madly after two figures that I had recognised in the distance. They heard me coming and turned back to meet me with cries of joy and surprise. With a last effort of my strength I reached them, and flung myself with a sob of gratitude at the feet of Charles and Henri !



"Not for worlds would I have come within reach of that tall, spectacled lunatic, who flew after me waving his strange weapon in the air."

To think—to think that I should have come to hail *them* gladly as my protectors and true friends! But if you had been with me that morning, if you had listened to that Professor and had watched the antics—the mad, meaningless antics of his accomplice and himself—you would fully understand my feelings.

V

IN WHICH HE PROVES AN EXPENSIVE PURCHASE

"MR. SMITH, Mr. Smith, I want that lovely bear for my own, my very own!" screamed an excited voice.

I glanced up, mildly pleased by this description of myself. Henri was allowing me to snatch a moment's rest half-way through our usual performance outside a village, and Charles was taking round his cap. It is quite wonderful how an audience thins out directly that cap is produced! I have heard the man Charles give his explanation of this phenomenon in terms that I am debarred from repeating.

But two people had lingered, in addition to a sprinkling of courageously penniless children. They were a tall, tired-looking young man in a top hat, and a small male child expensively clad in blue velvet. It was this last which had spoken.

"No, no!" said the tired young man. "Come along home at once. What do you want with a bear?"

"I want it," his charge declared. "If I don't have it, I shall scream and scratch and kick and hit anything that I can reach——"

"Come along home!" repeated Mr. Smith patiently.

"After that I shall probably bite you!" the imp in blue velvet stated calmly. "And then I shall lie down in the road and howl until I have a fit."

Mr. Smith capitulated after that. And really I don't wonder.

"What do you want to do, Plantagenet?" he asked hopelessly.

"I want that beautiful, darling bear. I want to take it home with us, and then father will buy it from its wicked, horrid-looking masters."

It was a frank-natured child, and apparently unconscious, or supremely careless, of the carrying quality of its voice. Henri and Charles exchanged glances on hearing this admirable description of themselves (for the sake of which I began to like Plantagenet); but they were much too excellent men of business to be prejudiced by a trifle like that. Henri addressed Mr. Smith with a smirk.

"Ees eet zat ze little monsieur would 'ave us accompany 'im to 'is 'ome?" he asked seductively.

"Yes, yes," Mr. Smith said miserably. "I suppose you'll have to come!"

Henri turned to the ring of children.

"Ze performance is ended," he announced. "*Allez-vous-en*, fly, boonk, or I will set zis *méchant* bear at you!"

Being English children, I need not tell you that this dreadful threat only produced giggles and delighted screams. It proved necessary to force me on to my hind legs and compel me with the stick to simulate rage (not so much simulation, either!) before we got rid of our audience. Then Henri turned with his best bow to Mr. Smith.

"We two and zis good Joseph are at your service, monsieur!" he said affably. "We will go wiz you to ze end of ze world eef you wish!"

I gathered from Mr. Smith's expression that he could very cheerfully have dispensed with the company of all three of us, but he only nodded wearily. He would have led the way with his charge, but Plantagenet, half mad with delight, insisted on walking at my side, and was restrained with difficulty from tickling me with a straw. I began to understand Mr. Smith's tired look.

In this order we passed in a little while through

some lodge gates and up a long drive to a huge mansion of new and glaring red brick.

At the foot of the stone steps, leading to the front door, we halted mechanically, and the child Plantagenet lifted up his voice and screamed. He possessed the shrillest and most carrying scream of my experience.

"Father ! father !" the little ruffian howled. "Come out and see my new bear !"

In less than a minute the great door opened, and a man and woman appeared with several tall, red-clad footmen behind them. The man was fairly old, small, plump, and red-faced, with a strutting action that recalled the walk of a peacock. I remember that my eye was caught and fascinated by the ornamental gold watch-chain that crossed the protruding curve of his waistcoat. It must have weighed at least a pound, and might have held a lion.

"What's hall this, what's hall this ?" he asked fussily. "Mr. Smith, Mr. Smith, 'ave you been thwarting Plantiginet again ?"

"No, Mr. Mugthorpe, I have not," Mr. Smith answered timidly.

"That's well ; I won't 'ave 'im thwarted. But what was 'e 'owling like that for, and—what is that 'ere hanimal doing 'ere ?"

At this question the lady beside him gave a shrill scream. She was a good deal younger than her husband, and even plumper.

"Oh, Halfred, a great fierce bear!" she cried. "'Ow could you let our darling Plantiginet risk 'is precious life beside such a creature, Mr. Smith?"

Mr. Smith gave a vague, protesting moan. Plantagenet, who had taken advantage of the general confusion to annoy me again with the straw, turned back to his parents.

"I brought him here, pa," he said. "I want him, I must have him! You're to buy him for me at once!"

"Plantiginet," said Mr. Mugthorpe with affectionate reproof, "is that the way to speak to your dear pa?"

"You oughter 'ave known better than to bring the animil 'ere, Mr. Smith!" the lady said angrily. "It must be sent away at once!"

"I really couldn't help it, Mrs. Mugthorpe," Mr. Smith said feebly. "Plantagenet threatened to have a fit if the bear did not come with us!"

Mrs. Mugthorpe gasped, and her small husband protruded the upper part of his waistcoat.

"Mr. Smith," he said sternly, "if my son, Plantiginet Mugthorpe, 'ad 'ad a fit whilst in your charge, owing to undue severity, I would 'ave thrashed you with my

own 'ands, sir, and then thrown you from this 'ouse !”

I suppose Mr. Smith, who was about eighteen inches taller than that little bumptious man, had his own reasons for meekness. In his place I think I would have flown straight at him. It was Plantagenet who broke the somewhat painful silence that followed this remark.

“I want that bear,” he roared. “I want to play with him ; I want him to sit at table with me ; I want to go to bed with him ! *I want that bear !*”

His voice rose gradually in the last four words from a fairly high pitch to what I imagine to be the shrillest note possible to the human larynx. It was a blood-curdling sound.

“‘Ush, ‘ush, Plantiginet,” said Mr. Mugthorpe. “You can’t ‘ave a bear. ‘Aven’t you got the pony what I bought you only a week ago ?”

The urchin proceeded as usual to state his ultimatum.

“If I can’t have that bear,” he said firmly, “I shall roll on the ground and scream until I foam at the mouth and gnash. Then I shall bite you all, and you’ll have to be burnt with red-hot pokers !”

He was a kind of child that I had never met before. And, taking one thing with another, although he was well enough disposed to me, I don’t know that I want

to see such another again. There was very little rest in his vicinity.

Mrs. Mugthorpe gave a faint scream at this horrid threat, but her small husband smiled quite proudly.

"'Igh couraged and hunconquerable!" he observed. Plantigenet is 'is father's true son! Plantigenet, won't nothing less than that bear content you?"

His son explained with emphasis that nothing would.

"Then you shall 'ave 'im," his father answered. "The child 'as an 'igh, proud spirit, Maria, the very himage of my own, and it won't do to break it."

He called up Henri, and, having ascertained my price, paid a portion of it after an unseemly haggles. Then, when my masters had departed with very meaning grins, he ordered some grooms to be called from the stables:

"The hanimal 'ad better be taken there for the time being," he remarked.

"No, he's to come to the nursery with me!" Plantagenet said firmly.

"'Ave it your own way, Plantigenet!" Mr. Mugthorpe said desperately. "Mr. Smith, remember that I 'old you responsible for my son's safety, and 'ere, you James," he added to one of the footmen, "you'd better stay outside the nursery door in case the hanimal

turns fractious and gets out of Mr. Smith's control like."

The nursery proved to be a huge room filled with toys, and for some hours nothing special happened. It is true that once I nearly lost my temper, owing to Plantagenet shooting a pointed dart at me from some weapon at murderous range, but, at the critical moment, Mr. Smith, with surprising presence of mind, emptied an entire box of chocolates before me. They were quite good, and I forgot my wrongs. And then a footman came up to fetch Plantagenet down to dessert, and, as he would not go without me, we all went down together.

I am afraid that neither Mr. nor Mrs. Mugthorpe was exactly pleased to see me. Mr. Mugthorpe's face was even redder than it had been before the meal. Plantagenet climbed on to a chair, and insisted that I should squat on another beside him. This feat I managed all right at the second attempt. I expect they would be able to mend the first chair I tried. Then Plantagenet and I set ourselves with steady persistence to clear the table of fruit and sweets. I think that, at the moment, we both came near to happiness.

"That's right, my boy, be kind to dumb hanimals!"



"Mr. Smith, with surprising presence of mind, emptied an entire box of chocolates before me."

Mr. Mugthorpe said patronisingly, as Plantagenet, a little pale by then and obviously near to illness, allowed me to grab the last sugared fruit in sight. Up to that moment we had been running neck and neck. Mr. Mugthorpe had a black cobwebby bottle before him, and his eye had become benevolent and slightly moist.

"What's 'is name, my lad?"

"I don't know. I call him Puggy," Plantagenet answered indifferently.

"An 'orrid, vulgar name!" Mr. Mugthorpe said emphatically. "Call 'im Montmorency, or something feudil and romantic. There's nothing like a good name. Look at your own! Plantiginet Halfred 'Enery Mugthorpe! Halfred after me, 'Enery after your mother's dad, and Plantiginet after 'is gracious Majesty's family."

Plantagenet made no answer. His lips were tightly compressed, and there was a pained look on his face. He had undoubtedly eaten too many sweets. There is nothing like moderation, after all. Now, for my part, I could have eaten three times as many. Mrs. Mugthorpe was watching me with a kind of nervous horror, or I think she would have noticed the condition of her son.

"Now that I've bought 'im for you," Mr. Mugthorpe

resumed, "'e must be well kept. I think we must hask Mr. Smith to give 'is fur a good grooming down every morning."

Mr. Smith, standing behind his charge's chair, started violently, and appeared to shudder.

"Don't let me 'ear of your refusing, Mr. Smith!" Mr. Mugthorpe remarked, fixing him with a watery eye. "Don't let me 'ave any of your University hairs and graces 'ere! I pays you a swinging salary to bring up my son Plantigenet in the way as 'e should go, and if I tells you to groom a bear, or a lion for that matter, in haddition to your other dooties, it'll have to be done!"

I do not know what Mr. Smith might have answered to this, because at that moment Plantagenet's greediness met with its due reward, and he was carried shrieking from the room by his mother, Mr. Smith, and several footmen. Mr. Mugthorpe and I, left alone, gazed steadily at each other for several minutes. The little man seemed in time to grow nervous under my scrutiny, although he kept filling and emptying his glass, and at last he rose with an exclamation and scuttled from the room. I had only been trying to convey to him that I should like a bottle of wine. Left to myself, I made a long paw with the idea of



"Mr. Mugthorpe and I, left alone, gazed steadily at each other for several minutes."

reaching one that was on the other side of the table. Unhappily my chair skidded under me, and I was compelled to clutch at the cloth to save myself. There was a most appalling crash, and, quite cowed by the damage that I had unwittingly done, I darted through the door, and hid in an unlighted room across the hall.

There I lay down and reflected, sadly, and with a touch of self-reproach. The chance of a comfortable home had been offered me, but so far I had done little to ingratiate myself with my new masters. It was true that Plantagenet appeared to like me, but it was idle to conceal from myself that the sight of his dining-room would not tend to increase any affection that his father might have for me. It is heart-rending the amount of damage that can be effected by dragging at a table-cloth! However, I determined to lie low for that night, and upon the morrow to devote all my great natural charm towards making a better impression.

So I remained in that dark room, and ignored the screams for my company that eventually resounded from the upper part of the house, where Plantagenet, apparently, had been nursed back to health and strength. He was a persistent child, as I have perhaps

indicated, but upon this occasion his desires were thwarted. I got behind a kind of screen in the corner of the room, and remained undetected by the searching footmen. The din from upstairs continued unchecked for a surprising period, but I suppose that even Plantagenet's lungs were susceptible to weariness. I take it that he fell asleep at last, and so did I.

I awoke somewhat startled from a species of nightmare, and had the misfortune to knock the screen over. I don't care what any one says, I am *not* clumsy! And it might have been much worse. As far as I could feel the screen was not seriously broken. I listened for a while, but to my huge relief the noise did not appear to have disturbed any one. And then an idea came to me.

It was a brilliant idea, although I say it myself, and should have had happier results. This house had taken me in and sheltered me, and now I determined to act as its guardian through the long dark hours whilst its inmates slept. Burglars might come (I had always wanted to meet a burglar), or there might be the beginning of a dangerous fire. In any case, I should be there, sleepless, faithful, and untiring, to avert the peril! I pictured the tearful gratitude of

Mr. and Mrs. Mugthorpe when they awoke to find that poor Joseph (or Montmorency) had possibly saved their lives ; I heard them declaring fervently that he must never leave them. Well, the results of my efforts were rather different from all this, but at least I did my best.

I began to pace noiselessly up and down the long dark hall. At least, I should have been noiseless if I had not had the bad luck to knock over a table. What people put such things in halls for I really *cannot* imagine. But I fought down my annoyance, and in a little while my vigil was rewarded, for I heard a cautious step !

It came from the back part of the house, and my instinct told me that it was a burglar. My chance had come, and I rose to the occasion as a great nature always does. I advanced stealthily towards the sound, and soon I made out a shadowy shape. The first glimmer of daylight was creeping into the hall, and I fancy that I and my opponent detected each other at the same moment. Anyway, I heard a gasp—a gasp of fear that strengthened even my iron nerves, and the dim figure leapt to one side and vanished through a door at its right hand.

I followed without hesitation. I found myself in a

huge, dark chamber, which I have since discovered was called the drawing-room. I could just make out the figure of my enemy. He appeared to be in the very act of crouching down behind a sofa. I made towards him, uttering a low growl, with the fur rising stiffly upon my neck. He seemed to be a poor-spirited burglar. He emitted a faint shriek as I approached, and, darting from behind the sofa, appeared to swarm up one of the walls. This amazed me, but, when I went to investigate the apparent miracle, I discovered a kind of high bureau which the darkness had hidden. My burglar had climbed up it with the agility of a monkey, and was squatting on the top.

So I sat down at the foot and gave the matter thought. I could, of course, have climbed up that bureau after the burglar, but I did not see that much would be gained by doing this. If I merely kept him where he was I should have the unspeakable gratification of exhibiting him as a kind of trophy to my grateful master in the morning. With this determination I stretched myself at full length upon the beautiful thick carpet.

For a while nothing happened, and then I heard the burglar move. Instantly I growled, and he was still again. Half an hour went by, and then he addressed

me hoarsely. Before this he had only whispered to himself, very wickedly.

"Good thing, then, nice thing! Let me come down!" he said persuasively.

This burglar annoyed me. He spoke to me as if I were a wretched dog! I growled more savagely, and he did not try it again. The light was growing very slowly in the room, and I could make out more of his figure.

He appeared to be holding something bright in his hand, and to be dressed in a kind of long pink overcoat. This seemed a queer costume for burgling in, but I knew very little of the habits of burglars. For all I knew they might be compelled by law to wear a kind of livery or uniform.

Ten minutes went slowly past, and the next thing that I remember was hearing a sharp click. The burglar put out one arm towards me, and, as I growled warningly, I saw a flame and heard a loud crack, and then the smash of breaking china. The burglar had fired a revolver at me! I lay flat, in what would have been panic in a weaker nature, and heard five more reports. By some miracle I was not wounded, but after each bang I heard the noise of broken glass or china. It was worse than pulling down a table-cloth!

And then—well, as you can imagine, the house was roused. I heard screams and the patter of feet, and people rushed into that drawing-room in dozens! Some one turned on the lights, and then for the first time I had a clear view of this miscreant whom I had trapped.

What mere clumsy words can do justice to my feelings as I realised that it was Mr. Mugthorpe himself in a long pink dressing-gown?

I pass over the distressing and even violent scene that followed.

I spent the remainder of the night in the stables guarded by several ribald grooms. I say nothing of my feelings, of my natural grief and disappointment. They were too deep for words.

About ten o'clock, haggard and breakfastless, I was led by my captors to a great bare room in the house. Here I found Mr. Mugthorpe, installed behind a high desk and protected by a bodyguard of gigantic footmen. He had the air of an outraged judge, but he signified by a gesture that I should not be led too near to him. I realised that I had been brought up for sentence.

I know now that Mr. Mugthorpe, having been made ridiculous before his household, desired very naturally

to reinstate his dignity by a display of authority. At the moment I will admit that I was slightly scared. It appeared that there were two other criminals. Mr. Smith and Plantagenet came in hand-in-hand, and were directed to stand by me. Mr. Smith was rather pale, and even his interesting charge appeared slightly subdued. I think he had noticed, as I had done, that a long yellow cane lay upon the desk before Mr. Mugthorpe.

That gentleman rose and cleared his throat.

"Mr. Smith," he said, "I wishes my servants to 'ear me give you a month's notice from to-day. It is thanks to your crass stoopidity that that 'ere habandoned hanimal was brought into my 'ouse. It is thanks to you that a mirror which cost me a cool 'undred pounds is smashed, besides old china of almost untold value. It is no thanks to you that Mrs. Mugthorpe is not a disconserlate widow!"

Mr. Smith bowed and said nothing. A groom beside me muttered, "'E won't go! This is the sixth time I've 'eard 'im sacked in two months!"

"As for you, Plantiginet," Mr. Mugthorpe resumed, "I speaks to you more in sorrow than in hanger. You 'ave an 'igh spirit, which I 'aven't cared to curb, but even 'igh spirits can be carried too far. Owing to the

criminal weakness of the University gentleman to 'oom you was intrusted you 'ave done a great deal of mischief. When I 'ave settled the hultimate fate of your wicked, dangerous pet, I shall visit you in your bedroom with this little hinstrument and shall endeavour to teach you an 'olesome sense of discipline. You can take out my son Plantignet *at once*, please, Mr. Smith !"

Plantagenet, during this speech, had drawn in his breath as in amazement ; at its conclusion he ejected it in a shriek of surprising volume. When he had been borne out kicking and struggling, Mr. Mugthorpe turned his small indignant eyes in my direction.

I do not know what fate he would have designed for me, but I am inclined to think that it would have been a painful one. I was just preparing for a desperate resistance when, thank goodness, an interruption came. A servant entered, and obtained leave from his majestic master to speak.

"The bear's former owners is outside, sir," the man said, "and they say that if the hanimal 'as proved troublesome they'll be 'appy to take 'im away without any extra charge !"

Mr. Mugthorpe pondered for a moment, and then with an angry scowl he nodded. I think he had been

rather impressed by my fearless, defiant bearing. Anyhow, I was allowed to leave that house of wealth unscathed. I found Henri and Charles awaiting me, and upon their faces shone the grins of those who had prophesied aright. As Henri remarked, "Ze sale" had been distinctly profitable !

VI

IN WHICH HE BECOMES AN OUTLAW

HENRI and the man Charles have contrived to prejudice me against most male humans, and I do not pretend to understand my liking for the one that I am going to tell you about. I am pretty sure that *you* would not have liked him. He was quite brutal to me at the start of our acquaintance, and he was desperate, and I have reason to believe that he was a thief—but I loved him from the very first. I simply couldn't help it.

It was a horrid, wet, dark autumn night, and I and Henri and Charles had contrived to lose our way very thoroughly. Not that the fault or the crass stupidity was *mine*! We were somewhere in the country among thick woods, and the moon occasionally showed itself behind the clouds. It did so, just as two men sprang out upon us.

They were dressed more queerly than any humans

that I have ever seen. They wore yellow coats and knickerbockers with strange dark marks upon them, ringed stockings, and little flat caps. It was not a becoming costume. I took this much in at once, but it was their actions rather than their appearance that most impressed me at the moment. One of them caught the man Charles by the throat, and threw him to the ground and sat firmly upon him; the other tried to do the same by Henri, but he dodged.

"Sacred pig, what ees eet zat you want?" Henri gasped heatedly, and the man Charles from the ground asked several questions of an intimate and shocking nature. But the human sitting upon his chest silenced him by the gloriously simple method of stuffing a double handful of dead leaves into his open mouth. The other stranger addressed Henri.

"We've tried 'ard to deal with you in a gentlemanly, delicate way," he remarked. "But if you chooses to arsk for trouble you'll just 'ave to 'ave it!"

Henri replied by endeavouring to get in one of his lightning-like kicks at his opponent's chin. The man in yellow ducked, his right fist shot out, and almost simultaneously Henri was in the same reposeful position as the man Charles. Both of them seemed to find the weights upon their chests oppressive.

Now," said Henri's sitter coolly, "are you agoing to fall in with our wishes or are you not?"

The situation interested me, and whilst Henri wrestled for sufficient breath and self-control with which to answer, I sat down on my haunches and looked at the two strangers. The one sitting upon Charles was very tall and thin and dark, with a long senseless sort of face that somehow annoyed me slightly. The other one, cushioned upon Henri, was short and exceedingly broad, with a brown face and small green eyes that twinkled. There was hardly any hair upon his head, but what there was was a carrotty red, and the beard that was beginning to show upon his face was of the same cheerful colour. And somehow as I looked at this man I forgot that most male humans were hateful, and I knew, I don't know why, that I must follow him wherever he went, and whether he wished it or not. He did *not* wish it, as it turned out, but that made no difference to my feelings,

"What—what ees eet zat you mean by zis?" Henri asked at last viciously.

"Some very dear friends of ours is after us," the red-haired man answered genially, almost affectionately; "and as, for reasons of our own, we ain't specially keen to meet them, we want some clobber as they

won't recognise. That's why you and your mate is going to change togs with me and my mate. We'll make a beginning with your very stylish 'at !'

As he spoke he removed Henri's peaked cap from his head and put it upon his own, then pressed his little flat cap upon Henri's short black bristles. Henri lost control of himself again temporarily, and the man Charles contrived to eject most of his mouthful of leaves. But before he could at all do justice to his feelings the thin dark man replaced the stopper with a liberal hand.

"Are you agoing to be sensible?" the red-haired man asked quite anxiously. "Or will you obleege us to 'urt you for your own good—and our'n? 'Ush!—what's that?"

He stiffened for a moment and listened. Then he caught up an armful of leaves and with them blindfolded Henri most effectually.

"Cover your bloke's face, Ted!" he said softly, "and then git! They're coming!"

The long man obeyed him, and then they both sprang up and vanished into the wood. Thanks to the little man's presence of mind I was the only one who had seen which way they went.

Henri and Charles got rid of their leaves and sat up,

speaking volubly. Before they had half finished, the squish of feet upon mud, which I had heard even before the red-haired man spoke, grew louder, and three men in a kind of uniform came running through the trees towards us. They were muddy and panting, and looked almost worn out. Their faces fell at sight of us.

"No luck yet, boys!" the leading one said. "Here, my men, have you seen anything of a red-haired——"

At this point Henri interrupted him—in order to explain in a sustained scream that he *had* seen something of a red-haired man!

The strangers listened with interest, but cut him short pretty soon.

"That's all right!" the leader said, and I wondered if they meant to shoot the little red man with the rifles they carried. "We're bound to nab 'em! Our men are everywhere, and they must be nearly dead beat by now. They've been out a day and a night, without grub as far as we know. Now, which way did they go?"

One of Henri's most striking characteristics is that he will never admit his ignorance of *anything*. He had been completely blinded by the leaves, but now without hesitation he pointed to a certain direction. As it

happened, it was exactly the opposite one to that which the yellow men had taken.

"Good!" said the man in uniform, "you'd better——"

But I never heard what he recommended, because at that moment I took advantage of the general confusion to slip away through the bushes. You see, I meant finding that red-haired man again.

I did not hear any yells behind me as I went. I am inclined to think, as a matter of fact, that Henri and Charles had forgotten all about me for the moment in their thirst for vengeance. They went with the uniformed men, and every step took them further from me as I followed with nose and eyes the trail that the yellow men had left. I stuck to it like wax, and although my powers are nothing like what they would be in a happier, more natural state, still, I flatter myself that they might be worse. I was never really at fault, and after half an hour of patient labour the scent grew warmer and as easy to follow as walking along a road. I knew that the men had run at first—but now they were walking, or rather staggering—and then all in a moment I came full upon them.

They were crouching under the bushes in a little dell. I could see and hear them before they knew I was near. I saw by the moonlight now that they were

covered with wet mud, that their faces were sharp and famished-looking, and that they were almost exhausted. The long man was speaking.

"It ain't no good, Ank!" he said. "I can't crawl no furdur. The sooner the blamed screws come up the better!"

And then my red-haired man spoke hoarsely.

"Don't you go talking like that, Ted!" he said. "I won't give in, blow it, I *won't* give in, and you shan't neither! The screws shan't git us yet!"

"I can't walk another step," Ted said with a kind of feeble snarl. "You'll 'ave to go on by yourself."

"Not me!" Ank said, and he swore fervently. "You long six foot of pumpwater, if you can't walk I'll blooming well carry you! Climb on my back, because I ain't going to leave you!"

And he meant it, too. Ah! there aren't many humans in the world like that small red-haired thief of mine. Ted looked at him in stupid wonder, and then he saw me in the moonlight.

"By snakes, there's that somethinged bear!" he said with a sort of gasp.

"Then the rest are with 'im," Ank cried softly, and he sprang up and listened for a moment. "No, they aint, I can't 'ear nothing. But what's 'e doing alone?"

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I walked right up to him, and rubbed against his legs. It was all that I could do to show that I liked him.

"What does 'e want?" Ank asked.

"'E seems precious fond of you," Ted muttered. He himself was clearly rather nervous of me.

"Well, 'e'll 'ave to steel 'is 'eart to be parted from me," Ank said with a grin. "We must be moving on, and 'e can't come with us. You stick to it, Ted, for a bit more, and we'll find some lonesome farm'ouse where we can git some grub and a change of clobber. And then it'll be easy to dodge up to the smoke and lie low for a bit."

He seemed able to put heart into the long man, who prepared with a groan to make a start, but they were both annoyed when they found that I proposed to accompany them.

"Good dawg, then, run away," Ank said, and laughed hoarsely, cold and wretched and hungry as he must have been. He was a human who always managed to laugh. "Run away and 'ide, we don't want you."

He picked up a stone and pretended to throw it, but I only came closer to him, whatever he did. And then he followed Ted's example and really lost his temper.



"I walked right up to him and rubbed against his legs."

I don't blame him for this. He had enough to try him at the moment.

He dragged down a great branch from a tree, and began to belabour me savagely. I just lowered my head, and stood it without sound or resistance. This is not my usual way of taking punishment, as Henri could tell you, and as I proved when Ted plucked up heart to kick me. I turned upon *him* with a fierce growl, but the red-haired man was different. I was prepared to take quietly anything he chose to give me.

And he did thrash me until he was tired. Then he dropped the branch and tried to walk away, thinking I had had enough. But I merely came after him at once. He stared at me quite helplessly.

"What are we to do with the worrying brute?" Ted growled.

"We can't stay 'ere," Ank muttered, and then his green eyes lit up in the moonlight as though you had held a match to them. "Lord love a duck! if we could only git clobber, 'ere's the very thing we want! 'Oo'd ever suspect two poor blokes with a dancing bear? Come along, Ted, we're going to do fust rate yet."

And that was how they let me join their company. My back was sore with the beating, but I did not think

about it as I followed Ank through the wet clinging woods. It was good enough for me just to be with him in any circumstances. He led the way, and only once during the first hour did we hear voices. We all three dropped flat at once, and the danger passed. Later on we struck a little track, and we walked steadily along this until we were well away from where I had parted from my masters and the others. And then suddenly we saw a *gendarme* coming straight towards us !

He was all alone, and he appeared at least as much staggered by the meeting as we were. He had the stupid face that many country humans have.

I heard Ank whisper, "If 'e tries to stop us we shall 'ave to down 'im," and then we were face to face with the man.

He stared at us blankly, as though he did not know what to do or what to make of us. He seemed chiefly surprised at the sight of *me*. I suppose, when you come to think of it, I *was* a queer addition to Ank and Ted. Anyway, he said and did nothing, and in a moment we had turned to the left and were out of sight.

"We shall 'ave to run," Ank whispered; and somehow by his energy he goaded Ted into a trot. I

shambled steadily behind them, and we ran for a mile or more before they dropped and lay panting. Ank, as usual, was the first to recover.

"I wonder just what 'e thought of us along of this blooming bear," he said meditatively. "Well, we shall 'ave to git on. 'E'll meet those somethinged screws per'aps, and then they'll be 'ard after us ag'in."

But the man Ted refused to move. He whined that he was starving and dead beat, and he even began to blubber like some great-child. Ank looked at me reflectively.

"I wish we could make the blooming bear carry you," he said. "Or I wish we could 'ave a good rump steak off 'im. I'd lay it 'ud taste better than the 'orse flesh at that old cemingtary. Well, it may come to that yit. Although I can't exactly say at the moment 'ow we should kill and prepare 'im for the blooming table. 'E might start preparing us if we tried."

I admit that this remark made me shudder. I was disappointed with Ank for making it, but even that could not alter my feelings towards him. He turned back to Ted, and somehow, by means of jeers and oaths and even kicks, he got the man upon his feet again. He was staggering himself, but he made the tall man lean upon him. And so they went reeling on.

The next thing I remember clearly is hearing voices within a few yards of us. Ank dragged Ted down at once among the bushes, and shook his fist at me to make me follow his example. You humans never give a bear credit for the smallest common sense, just because he doesn't happen to speak your unmusical language. I could make out half a dozen uniformed men in a little clearing before us. They were talking eagerly to the country *gendarme* that we had met.

"They went past me down a lane," he was saying. "They looked pretty beat, and, blow me tight, if they hadn't a blooming great bear be'ind them!"

"A bear?" one of the others said. "You must have been drinking, man!"

"No, as sure as I'm alive it was a bear," the man persisted.

"And why didn't you stop 'em?"

"I was just going to, although the bear took me aback like for a bit. But I was just drawing my truncheon, when—when they broke away among the trees."

I suppose you can imagine that all this was pretty horrible for us three, with these men almost near enough to touch. You may think that it didn't matter for me, but it did. I did not know what they would

do to Ank if they caught him, but I feared that they might be going to kill him. Anyway I was sure that it would be something painful. And by this time I would have gone without food for a week rather than the man should be caught. We crouched there, scarcely daring to breathe, and then to our huge relief we heard the men move off.

When they were out of earshot Ank got us moving again. I don't know exactly what the little man had done to make those other humans so eager to catch him, but I *do* know how brave he was. He was starving and his legs kept giving way under him for want of sleep, but he went forward, and he kept Ted moving too. Time after time that long thin person tried to lie down, and time after time the little red-haired man dragged him on again. He spoke often, and his language was usually unquotable, but it was always plucky and cheery. And then at last we saw a bright light through the endless trees before us.

"Thank Gawd ! it's a farm'ouse at last," Ank gasped fervently. "We'll go in, if it's bung full of screws Your fairy step is getting a little languid like, Ted, and I'm a trifle fatiguayed, as the French say, meself."

He led the way towards a long, low sort of building at the edge of the woods. As we came near, a dog

barked, but I growled at it, and it began to whimper. Most dogs are curs. Ank stood on tiptoe, and looked through the window of the lighted room.

"There's an old cove asleep afore the fire," he muttered. "'Is balmy slumbers will 'ave to be disturbed."

He moved round to the door, and knocked upon it sharply. We heard a grunt and an exclamation, and then unwilling steps began to move inside the room.

"Who's there, and what do you want at this time of night?" said a voice from behind the door.

"We've lost our way in the woods, and we're 'alf dead with cold," Ank said plaintively. "If you've a feeling 'eart be'ind your waistcoat you'll let us in."

This appeal appeared to do its work. Several bolts creaked, and then the door slowly opened. A stout, elderly, red-faced man stood looking at us, and I thought for a moment that he would fall to the ground in pure amazement as he took in the appearance of our little party. He would certainly have slammed the door to again, but Ank's foot had instantly moved forward to prevent this.

"Good Lord!" was all the man said.

"You see 'ow it is with us, guv'nor," Ank said genially. "We're a pair of 'onest, 'armless gentlemen

'oo travel about the country persuading this haccomplished bear to 'op and dance for our living. But we was set on this evening by two—by two other gentlemen 'oo was in slight temporary trouble, and they made us change clobber with them. That's why we're harrayed in these onbecoming garmin'ts."

"Oh !" said the farmer, and that was all.

"And now we want some grub—oncommon !" Ank exclaimed, and he pushed past the man into the beautiful warm kitchen. We followed him eagerly. As for the farmer, he made fast the door, and then turned to us again.

"You're welcome to a meal and a rest," he said gruffly, and he seemed to have made up his mind about something. "I was sitting up because of a sick beast, and you startled me at first."

Ank and Ted had dropped into chairs before the fire, and I was crouching on the floor.

"That's right, guv'nor !" Ank said encouragingly. "'Oo shall say as 'ow the old Henglish 'ospitality 'as passed away ? Bring on the something or other viands, and don't forgit to bring plenty on 'em."

As he spoke we heard a scuffling, and the inner door of the kitchen opened. Three people looked in upon us. They were an elderly woman, a stoutish bouncing

sort of girl, and a hobbledehoy. I am no authority on female humans' dress, but the costume of the woman struck me as being peculiar. It included a man's great-coat, a man's felt hat, and a blanket. The general effect was rather striking.

Both she and the girl began to squeal at sight of us.

Ank got up, tired as he was, and made them a low bow.

"Far be it from me, or the courtly gentleman what is 'alf asleep in that cheer, to haffright you, mum," he said genially. "Come right in and make yourself at 'ome. And you too, ducky," he added to the girl.

Both the women came in at once. I believe myself that, although startled, they were rather taken with Ank. He had an unrestrained way of speaking especially in moments of excitement, but he certainly had great charm of manner.

"Is the bear safe?" the woman asked abruptly.

"'E loves me like—like as though I was 'is dear Aunty Jane," Ank assured them warmly. "And you may bet that any friends of mine is friends of 'is."

I had noticed that the farmer had exchanged a quick look with the hobbledehoy, while the others were talking, and I wished that it had been in my power to inform Ank of this. But of course it wasn't.

I had an uneasy kind of instinct that something was wrong. But Ank appeared to suspect nothing.

"You and Mary bring in all the cold grub in the house, mother," the farmer said hospitably.

"And if you 'ave such a thing as whisky in the 'ouse," Ank observed pathetically, "I'm sure that three spots of it on a nice lump of sugar might prevent me poor friend from catching a nasty chill."

The farmer at once produced a bottle and glasses from a cupboard.

"Say when," he remarked invitingly.

"As near the top as it will go, guv'nor," Ank said encouragingly. "I shan't spill any, me 'and being remarkably steady. My dear chum and I daren't risk mixing water with it to-night."

And they engulfed a glass apiece of the yellow stuff without so much as winking. I could have done with some myself, but as usual no one thought of offering *me* any. And then the two women came bustling back with a pie and a great joint of cold beef, and put them on the table with a cloth and plates and other unnecessary things. The boy had left the kitchen with them, but I noticed that he did not come back.

Ank and Ted dragged up their chairs to the table and began a meal of really surprising dimensions. The

farmer carved for them steadily, and for some twenty minutes he was never once unemployed. They bolted the food ravenously like starving men, but I will say for Ank that he gave a thought to my needs. He directed the farmer's wife to supply me with a really decent meal, and I have seldom enjoyed one more. But it made me slightly nervous to see the quantity of whisky that Ank and Ted were drinking. I knew so well the effect that such stuff has upon you weak-headed humans. Why even I myself in my time have committed certain indiscretions under its influence. The farmer was pressing the liquor upon his guests, and had produced another bottle. His wife and the girl were watching the two men in yellow with a kind of half-frightened fascination.

"We must tear ourselves away when it gets light," Ank remarked, laying down his knife and fork at last. "And before then we shall 'ave to ask you ladies to retire. Because this kind 'ospitable gentleman is a-going to find us a change of duds apiece. But you needn't break our 'earts by going just yet. Won't either of you do nothing for our hentertainment?"

The whisky and the food had made a great change in the little man. His face was flushed and his eyes were brighter than ever. As for Ted, he was rocking

in his chair with drowsiness. The farmer began to look distinctly nervous. Ank emptied his glass and staggered towards the girl.

"I've 'ad a dull time the last two years," he said with a hiccup. "And now, so 'elp me, I'm going to 'ave a little fun. Wake up, Ted, you fool, and come and lead out the old lady. We're going to 'ave a pleasant little dance."

But Ted only answered with a whole-hearted snore. The older woman gave a stifled scream, and the farmer half rose as though he would interfere, but the girl got up with a little excited laugh. She did not seem to object to these unusual proceedings. Ank caught her hand and waist and began to dance with a curious clumsy kind of solemnity. I watched them for a moment, and then something made me look suddenly at the farmer and his wife. They were not watching Ank and his partner; they seemed to be listening!

And then I understood. I heard steps outside, all round the house as it seemed, and then a quick heavy blow upon the door. The farmer sprang up and tore it open, and four uniformed men, with Henri and Charles behind them, pressed into the kitchen.

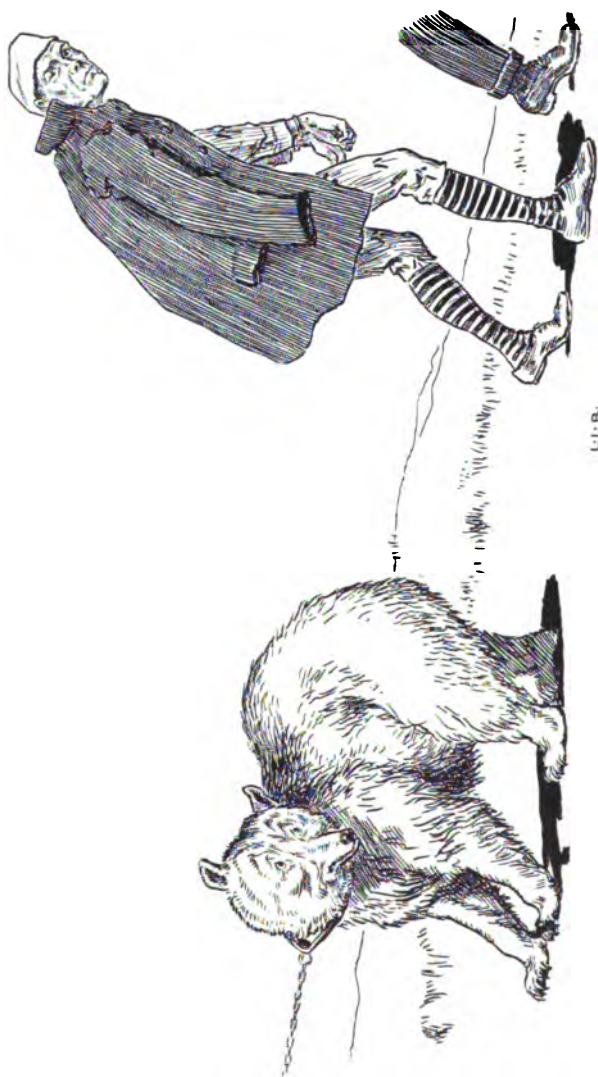
I don't think I shall ever forget that horrid moment. Somehow for once I was not concerned at all about

my own recapture. I just turned and looked at Ank. He dropped the girl's hands and the solemn stupidity went right away from his face. He seemed to be sobered all in a moment. And a queer grey hopeless look came into his face that made me want to fight hard for him—if only fighting had been any good.

"It's all up, 207!" one of the men said, and his voice was almost friendly. "We're all round the house, and it's no good making a fuss. You'd best not be a fool!"

Ank did not speak. He held out his hands sullenly and there was a click, and I saw that they had put something bright upon his wrists. Ted was still asleep with his head upon the table. They woke him up, and he blinked and swore hoarsely as he stared about him.

The farmer was laughing with relief. It was his wretched boy who had brought up the pursuing party, who had managed somehow to get upon our tracks again. They were all in high spirits, and seemed well disposed towards their prisoners. Two of them even put their own great-coats round their wet shoulders. But Ank turned to me, when Henri had snapped that beastly chain on my collar, and he spoke for the first time.



“And then they took him away.”

"You poor devil, so they've put the darbies on you, too," he said, and that queer look was still on his face. "We've not 'ad a very long run, none of us three, but we shall all likely get our backs scratched for it. 'I wonder what made you take such a blamed fancy to *me*."

And then they took him away.

VII

IN WHICH HE IS QUITE THE FEATURE OF A PAGEANT

I DON'T like German humans—no, nor German bears either! After all, I was born in Paris, and that is bound to influence one's sympathies. Those are my views, and so it came about that I entered with good heart into the sanguinary international feud about which I am going to tell you.

We had come to a village green, we three, my masters and myself, and were just about to give our performance when to our indignant amazement (for no show means no food with all of us), we saw three rival figures approaching. To be exact, they walked on to one side of the green as we walked on to the other. Both sides denied this fact afterwards, but you can take it from me that it was the case. They were two German humans and a German bear.

The humans were tall, stout men wearing spectacles

and possessed of a rather obvious dislike for soap and water. This should have been a bond of sympathy between my masters and them, but it wasn't. I do not care very much about water myself, but, anyway, when you have brown fur, washing seems rather a waste of time. Now, if I were a Polar bear or a human it would be another matter !

As for their bear, he was a wretched-looking creature of about my size and weight, I suppose, but immeasurably inferior to me in appearance and intellect. I felt this at once, and never saw cause to alter my opinion. He was the sort of bear that, if we had met on level terms with no humans about, I really should not have cared to have had much to do with.

Most of the villagers were collecting in anticipation of seeing me, and neither the Germans nor my masters were disposed to forego the harvest of coppers. This fact was at once apparent, but it was Henri who got in the first word in his quick French way.

"Eet ees our show," he said. "We were ze first ! Will you zen be good enough to—what would you say ?—move on ?"

Both Germans were smoking huge and suffocating china pipes. The leader answered without removing his.

"We was here first," he said slowly and ponderously, with a striking lack of originality.

Something in his heavy manner seemed to madden both Henri and Charles at once. I should not describe either of them as men of equable tempers. The following dialogue, which I have toned down and otherwise diluted, ensued without delay :

"Pigs and thieves, ze pitch ees ours ! *Allez-vous-en !*"

"*Donner wetter !* it was for you to go !"

"Prussian assassins, you shall be most painfully slit up ! We 'ave knives, and feet, and teeth !"

"French frogs, we was seeing you carried away by ten thousand *teufels* before we go !"

It was that last remark which settled it. Both parties discarded without more ado the tactics of diplomacy. But once again it was Henri who made the first move. He lifted his right foot and caught the leading German an undoubtedly painful kick beneath the chin, before his stolid adversary had realised that actual hostilities had begun. The German bit clean through the stem of his great pipe, and reeled backwards, spitting out teeth. Then he recovered himself and closed with Henri. But at that moment my attention was diverted rather abruptly.

Something whizzed through the air, missing my head by a bare inch. It was the paw of that despicable German bear! He had tried to steal a march upon me, as Henri had done upon his master, but, thank goodness! he had misjudged his distance. And he was soon to find that he had met a Tartar! We were both muzzled, and so were compelled to rely upon our paws. Now my right paw is a peculiarly useful limb, capable of dealing a fairly crushing blow. I am sure that the German bear would confirm this statement. It was that paw which smashed against the side of his misshapen head, and rolled him howling dismally upon the turf. It was that paw and its worthy fellow that closed upon him when he rose, and hugged him roundly as we grappled in a growling, worrying wrestle.

Taking it all in all, that was about the most satisfying five minutes that I had enjoyed in this dull England. But I need not tell you that it was all too brief. It is always the way with cheery things. I had become quite oblivious of time and space, but a stick fell heavily upon my ribs, and I was dragged from my enemy by my chain, protesting violently. In another two minutes, only two minutes, I would have made mince-meat of that Teutonic bear! But as it was he got off much too lightly.

I looked about me, panting heavily. A *gendarme*, or some general nuisance of that sort, had come up, and with the aid of the villagers had torn apart the human combatants. The latter had then separated us, their bread-winners. I looked rather curiously at the four of them. Charles had received a scalp wound, and had parted with a good deal of hair, and Henri's nose was bleeding freely, but they had certainly made the most of their time with those two Germans. The leader's face was a mass of scratches, there was a lump like a large egg beneath his jaw, and he seemed more than a little dazed. As for the other one, I learned later that the *gendarme*, had only just arrived in time to save his right eye! The man Charles had got him down, and was apparently doing his best to deprive him of it with his thumb when he was interrupted. Both the china pipes were shattered, and, taking one thing with another, I have seldom seen two men more sorry for themselves than were those two Teutons. I think I may say with all modesty that there was a Teutonic bear in much the same condition.

I don't know exactly how things were settled with the *gendarme*. He clearly wanted to arrest all six of us, but Henri contrived to make it clear to him that the Germans were the people to arrest, and that if this

were done he and Charles would actively assist the law. This view seemed to appeal to the solitary *gendarme*. The Germans were blubbering hoarsely, and incapable of intelligible speech, or of resistance. So they were marched off to captivity, and, when these legal preliminaries had been satisfactorily settled, I and my masters returned triumphantly to the green and gave a most successful performance to the delight of the rustics. After which we left the neighbourhood without ostentation.

I have been forced to describe this rather distressing incident to you, because it led to a very painful sequel in the near future. It caused the public disgrace of my masters, and, what was far worse, of myself. It completely spoiled a public spectacle—but I anticipate. Let me pass hurriedly to the day following the fight upon the green.

We were trudging towards a certain little town, whose name not even the offer of honeycomb would drag from me, when a motor-car drew up beside us. In it were seated a small thin man, with a sharp face and bright eyes like a bird, and a tall, gaunt, spectacled lady.

The little man pointed to me with his hand.

"There you are, Miss Dreeber!" he cried.
"There's the very thing we want for the pageant!"

(Confound his impudence, what did he mean by calling me a thing !)

The lady shook her head.

"He won't do," she said.

"Why not ?" asked the small man abruptly.

"Not sufficiently under control, of course," answered the lady laconically.

The little male sprang from the car and positively danced upon the road with impatience. He was the sort of human who gives you the impression that he may have a fit at any moment from pure excitement.

"I hate futile objections !" he said fiercely. "Here you, sir, is that bear of yours under control ?"

Of course Henri said at once that I was. A mere question of truth is never any bar to Henri.

"You hear, Miss Dreeber," remarked the little man triumphantly. "Now, don't contradict me, please, they shall come straight along with us to the committee. And I am ready to stake a cool sixpence that that bear will be the feature of the pageant."

Well, in a way, I *was* the feature of the pageant, I suppose. But hardly as he meant it, I am afraid. Miss Dreeber smiled, and lay back against the cushions.

"I never argue with you, Sir Thomas," she observed

calmly. "Life is far, far too short. You must do as you wish, of course, but permit me to say that I can accept no responsibility in the matter."

Sir Thomas shrugged his shoulders and spoke to Henri, and next moment we were following the car towards the town, which was not more than half a mile away. Somewhere in the centre of it we halted before a large building, and our small patron led us fussily up the steps into a room off a big kind of hall.

Inside this room were seated half a dozen men and women, who appeared to be engaged in a rather heated discussion. To speak continuously at any cost seemed to be the ambition of each. They became silent from amazement as we entered, and little Sir Thomas danced forward simply beaming with delight.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I think I may say that I have secured a striking feature for our pageant that is the subject of your discussion," he said. "I am sorry not to see Mr. Bramber here, but I think he will be the first to admit that I have for once, if I may say so, wiped his eye——"

"Not at all, Sir Thomas!" said a loud voice, and a tall, burly man pushed open the door, and signed to three beings to follow him into the room. I am sure

you will never guess who those three beings were. Well, then, they were the two German humans and their wretched bear !

Sir Thomas and Mr. Bramber glared at each other in disappointed dismay and appeared incapable of speech. It was Miss Dreeber who broke the silence.

"It seems that there are two Richmonds in the field," she remarked, rather meaninglessly as it appeared to me.

"My idea was that this bear should represent Russia in our Procession of Nations," exclaimed Sir Thomas and Mr. Bramber, finding their voices simultaneously.

"And a very good hidea, too," said a stout, shiny-faced man patronisingly.

I made his acquaintance later in a rather appalling fashion. He was mayor of the town, and also its leading butcher.

"My men and their bear are undoubtedly superior for the part," Sir Thomas resumed. "They are all three distinctly Russian in appearance."

I suppose he meant this remark well, but he made me stiffen slightly.

"Not a bit, not a bit," Mr. Bramber rejoined warmly. "Take away my men's spectacles and their pipes, put them into fur caps, and they are Russians to the life."

"They certainly all six look as though they have been fighting the Japs," Miss Dreeber remarked dispassionately.

It was then that Henri spoke. Up till that moment he had been stricken silent by the dramatic appearance of our late antagonists. It appeared that the magistrates, in the absence of my masters, and moved to pity by the battered condition of those Teutons, had released them that morning with only a nominal fine.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Henri began with his most courtly air, "eet ees I and my compatriot and zis good bear, Joseph, 'oo must be employed by you for *ze fête*. Zare can be no comparison between ourselves and zese—zese outcasts! You 'ave but to regard zare veellanous countenances and zare wounds, which prove zat zey 'ave lately been engaged in some 'ateful brawl."

Henri was certainly a man of considerable unscrupulous talent. Both the Germans began to gobble with not unnatural anger at his last argument, but the stroke had told. It is promptness rather than truth that pays with humans, I have noticed. And there could be no real question as to which group of three was the better favoured.

One of the Germans had the most painful-looking and comprehensive black eye that I have ever seen,

and the other, besides being terribly disfigured by scratches, could only speak in a thick mumble because of a dislocated jaw.

As for myself and that—that animal, I simply won't insult your intelligence by drawing any comparison between us. His fur must always have been inclined to patchiness, but you can take my word for it that it was more so than ever that afternoon. I eyed him with some little complacency.

His masters were obviously somewhat cowed. One of them kept glancing nervously at the man Charles, who was exhibiting his thumb in a truculent suggestive manner, and the other, the leader, appeared to think that Henri might start kicking at any moment.

At their best they could hardly have been the equals of my brazen masters in effrontery, and now they were sadly handicapped by their wounds.

"My man is right," little Sir Thomas exclaimed. "There's no comparison possible between them. I suggest, with all deference to Mr. Bramber, that his *protégés* be dismissed with a gratuity, and that we explain our wishes to these worthy Frenchmen."

Henri and Charles drew themselves up and smirked at this misleading description, but Mr. Bramber reddened angrily.

"Sir Thomas goes rather too fast," he said. "I for one must decline to be dictated to by him. In my opinion the bear of these respectable Germans is far more suitable for our purpose than is that sorry, disreputable-looking animal."

He was speaking of me—of me! I grew hot all over with anger, and stared at him fixedly, scarcely able to believe my ears. I had not been so annoyed since—since the last time Henri forgot two of my meals running.

Then I turned to that mangy German atrocity, who had understood, of course, and saw that he was quite swelling with horrid triumph, and that decided me. Patience and self-control are all very well, but there are limits—there are limits!

I got up from my haunches, twitched the chain from Henri's hands, and walked slowly but resolutely towards that bear. The fur was standing up all thick and bristly down my back. I could feel it. My intention was to sweep the floor (as the Americans say) with that Teutonic outcast. To do him justice, he did not shrink from me, but something happened to prevent his chastisement.

Henri and Charles started forward after me, and the two German humans interpreted their movement as the

beginning of strife. They may have been fairly brave men naturally, but their nerves seemed to have been shaken by the peculiarly ferocious methods of warfare employed by my abandoned masters. Anyway, before I could reach my opponent, one of them tightened his chain, the other prodded him with a stick, and with two unintelligible Teutonic howls they scuffled hastily from the room.

Henri laughed shrilly.

"*Enfin !*" he exclaimed fervently. "Ze treachery of ze Prussians at Waterloo ees fully avenged. Ah, *ma belle France*, 'ow proud, 'ow justly proud, may you be of your two so worthy sons zis day ! Would zat even more bright eyes of ze fairer sex were 'ere to be'old our triumph."

And he clicked his heels and bowed to Miss Dreeber, who looked at him as you humans look at a possibly dangerous lunatic.

"I would 'ave liked," the man Charles said regretfully, in his frank, simple manner, "to 'ave finished ze work zat I so well began."

And he glanced longingly in a rather horrible manner at his right thumb.

"I think that settles the vexed question," Sir Thomas remarked complacently. "I will now very briefly out-

line my suggestions with regard to these two men and their charge."

"And when you 'ave done so, Sir Thomas," the mayor observed, "we will proceed, if hall are hagreeable, to the hinteresting question of the catering for the subsequent banquet. I don't want to hinfluence nobody's decision in any way, but my terms is reasonable and my prime Henglish beef won't poison nobody, like the joints which them as shall be nameless sells."

I pass briefly over the week that followed, during which, although annoyed by daily rehearsals, we all three, even myself, lived like fighting-cocks. The day of the pageant came, and we were early at the dressing-rooms. I have not a very high opinion of the intelligence of you humans at any time, and I am bound to say that the service for which we were employed did not tend to raise it. I can easily understand people liking to look at *me*, but what else there was of interest in that long unwieldy procession was certainly not very noticeable. If you had only seen Henri and Charles, dressed in fur caps and coats and partially cleansed for the occasion, arranged in striking attitudes beside me upon a kind of truck, you must have shared my amusement. I was chuckling so heartily that once I nearly fell off the truck.



"If you had only seen Henri and Charles dressed in fur
caps and coats."

All went well at first. The vehicle ahead of us was manned by half a dozen aggressively English females draped lavishly in the tricolour. I had to keep my eyes averted from them, out of pure patriotism. Behind us was a creaking load of stout, red-faced men obviously unhappy in ill-fitting breeches and enormous top-boots, thirstily holding empty flagons and hungrily surveying imitation joints of roast beef. It looked like the advertisement of a restaurant. It was England. We moved very slowly through dense crowds of people, and it was when we were near the great hall that the first hint of trouble came.

It took the form of an egg. It sailed through the air and flattened itself in a whole-hearted fashion against Henri's cheek. It was a large egg, but I do not think that any of it was wasted. In any case, judging by its aroma, it would have been unfit for food. It was followed by a deceased cat, which wrapped itself in a distressing manner round the neck of the man Charles, and by a cabbage, which took me squarely between the eyes. In the same order and without the least delay Henri, the man Charles and I lost our tempers, and glared around us to discover to whom we owed these attentions. We had not far to seek.

The two Germans and their bear were in the crowd, and in some insidious way they had contrived to turn the sympathies of the public very strongly against us. A great roar went up, "Down with the Roosians!" and a very ugly rush was made towards our truck. That rush was headed, strongly against their will, by the two Germans, and less unwillingly, to do the creature justice, by that bear of theirs. And in this fashion began a conflict that shortly bade fair to become general.

I don't know whether you have ever been hit between the eyes by a hard stalky cabbage? It hurts, and makes you anxious to hurt some one else—the thrower for choice, but, anyway, some one. I met that bear upon the edge of the truck, and caught him a sweeping blow that sent him spinning. But at that moment the vehicle was upset by the rush of people, and I, Henri, Charles, and the two Germans were pinned down beneath it.

And then, what with the pain and the fear of suffocation, and the idea of being trapped, I am sorry to say that I lost my head. Until that moment I think I may say that I had been entirely blameless, but now I took a distinctly prominent part in the trouble. It was quite dark under the truck, and some instinct prompted



"Someone put his head out of the window below me."

me to hit out at random. My efforts were answered by a French malediction and a German howl, and then I broke free somehow and, maddened by the horrid din around me, rushed blindly down the crowded street. And you can take it from me that no one attempted to bar my way.

After running about a hundred yards, I came to a huge coach drawn by four fat horses. I can hardly account for what I did next. I suppose I thought that I should be safe and out of the uproar upon the top. Anyway, I half sprang, half scrambled on to the box, which was vacated at the same moment by a stout, shrill-voiced person in pink stockings who seemed badly scared about something, and I climbed from there to the roof of the vehicle. And then I lay down and panted.

Some one put his head out of the window below me.

"What's hall this?" he asked angrily. "What's the delay, and why don't the perlice do their dooty? And 'oo is it that 'as *dared* to climb on to the roof of my coach?"

There was much shouting and laughter all around us, but the confusion in the distance seemed to be growing less. Charles, Henri, and the Germans had just been arrested, as I know now, and a strong body of

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blue-coated *gendarmes* were getting the excited crowd in hand again. But most of the trucks had been overturned, and I fear that the general effect of the pageant had been somewhat spoiled. In the first momentary hush a dozen voices hastened to answer the question that the angry gentleman in the coach had put.

"It's a bear, your Washup!" they yelled cheerfully. "'E's setting there above you now!"

"A bear!" screamed the voice below me. "Good 'eavens——!"

His remarks were interrupted in a horrible fashion, for at that moment I moved upon the roof with the idea of getting down, and—and it gave under me! There was a splintering crack, I felt as though the world were coming to an end, and then I fell heavily through on to the seat opposite the red-faced mayor! And for a minute we gazed in a bewildered manner into each other's faces!

It was the mayor himself who tried us in the police-court next day. I gathered that he had risen from a bed of sickness in order to do so. I suppose his feeling was not unnatural. We were all there. Henri, Charles, and the two battered Teutons in the dock, and that other bear and myself in a specially

constructed pen with two divisions. We had passed the night in the cells, where the *gendarmes* had led me after the mayor had swooned in his ruined coach.

Personally, when I recognised him upon a kind of high wooden chair I could only fear the worst. And I am bound to say that it was not his fault that my fears were not fully realised. He wanted fervently, as far as I could make out, to imprison the four human offenders "without the option," whatever that means; and he wanted, still more ardently, to order the execution of that German bear and myself, as public dangers.

But some one (they called him the clerk, I think, and the mayor appeared to lean upon his legal judgments as a cub leans on its mother) said that it wouldn't do. It seemed that the Germans might be punished for starting the trouble, but that neither Henri nor the man Charles had done anything illegal. And so we should all three have to be released. It was a crushing disappointment for the mayor, but he relieved himself by threatening untold penalties if Henri did not stop the triumphant speech in excited French which he had started from the dock.

As we left the court the man Charles said something entirely unquotable about "zese Eenglish people" and their pageants.

VIII

IN WHICH HE NARROWLY ESCAPES VIVISECTION

I ADMIT that the man deceived even me at the start, which is a thing that few humans can do. To look at him you would never have guessed his almost insane cruelty. He was little and round and fat, and he wore big staring spectacles. He was the type of human that one fancies would be good eating, if one happened to be carnivorous. He had a face like a red wrinkled apple, and he looked good-nature itself. And yet I wonder that every hair in my body did not turn white with horror because of that man's intentions towards me !

This is how I first made his acquaintance. I and Henri and the man Charles were reclining in some one else's meadow after the toils of a long, hot and successful summer day. And then suddenly as we lay I heard a voice from the other side of the hedge. It was a low

voice and it was unheard by my drowsy masters, but my ears are sharp.

"Dare he is," it said cautiously. "Dat is de bear for which I have been waiting, ubon which I have my heart set. He must be mine. He is necessary for de gombletion of my so long and arduous exberiments."

I did not know what the speaker meant, but he appeared to admire me and I liked him for it.

"Shall you den burchase him, Brofessor?" asked another voice.

"No, no, Fritz!" the first human said hastily. "De true scientist is above all egonomical, and, besides, my oder exberiments have gostly been. He shall come to me by anoder blan. I have what you gall de bersuasive way with animals, and ubon my handkerchief dare is de gharm dat dey cannot resist."

"Will dare nod be drouble and brosecution if you him sdeal, mine ungle?" asked the second voice anxiously.

"Fritz, I resent sdrongly de word 'sdeal'! Id is unbegoming and imbproper from a nephew to his so revered ungle. De bear will me follow, dat is all! How may I den brevent him? We shall now with his masters gonverse, asking dem so foolish questions, and den you shall drink with dem de whisky dat you

garry, and—de bear will slip away after me drough de dwilight. All is brebared; his gage his bresence awaits !”

“I shall obey, mine ungle,” said the second voice sulkily, and then two humans came through the gate into our field.

The first was the little red-faced man that I have already described, and the other was a tall, fleshy, fair-haired young man also in spectacles. They came towards us and my masters roused themselves nervously, expecting no doubt to be accosted by an inhospitable and excited farmer.

“Good evening, gendlemen !” said the small leader with a stately bow, and Henri, ever outwardly courteous, dragged himself from the ground and clicked his heels together. The man Charles appeared to be moodily wondering whether anything tangible was to be gained by politeness.

“We have admired your so beautiful bear in de village for de last few days, and we a liddle bet about his sbecies have. My so foolish nephew dat he is of de ferocious grizzly kind insists, whilst I so well know dat he is a Bolar or Arctic bear with his so pure white goat a liddle soiled. It is for you, gendlemen, to decide !”

Henri stared at the two strangers in wonder, and then apparently set them down in his mind as harmless lunatics. I knew better, but I had heard their conversation. The man Charles chuckled coarsely.

"But both of you are right, monsieur!" Henri said affably. "Zis good bear, oose name is Joseph, ees 'alf Polar and 'alf of ze ferocious grizzly blood. 'E was captured far far away in savage Africa by zis brave man Charles, my faithful friend, and myself. Ah, messieurs, ze combat and ze danger were terrible, affrighting! Twice Charles, my gallant follower, implored me piteously to abandon ze struggle, and twice by my 'eroic example I fired 'im to fresh efforts!"

The man Charles said something to himself at this point which the strangers did not hear and which Henri affected not to hear. The little German had taken a rather dingy handkerchief from his pocket and was fluttering it in the air. A curious penetrating smell came from it that seemed to run through all my blood.

He and his nephew were listening with grave attention to Henri's facetious falsehoods.

"For a day and a night we fought, messieurs, and zen zis Joseph rendered 'imself to us and became our faithful servant. Eef you wish 'e shall give you

a private performance now, zis minute, of ze superb tricks zat we 'ave taught 'im ?”

The German shook his head regretfully. He came nearer and patted me and held the handkerchief close to my nose. And that settled the resolve in my heart.

“No, no, nod dis evening, I fear,” he said. “I must away, but my nephew would wish with you to chat. 'E admires you so greatly dat he has whisky in a bottle for your refreshment brought.”

The man Charles sprang to his feet at once. He appeared to have decided that something *was* to be gained by politeness. He and Henri became positively fawning in their attentions to the tall young German, who had produced a bottle. The three of them sat down together.

“Dat is well !” the little man said benevolently. “You shall continue to tell my nephew of your so gallant deeds. Gendlemen, I you good night wish !”

Henri and the man Charles returned his farewells rather curtly. It was the other German who held the bottle. Already it was passing from hand to hand, and they had no thought for anything else. I felt instinctively that quite soon the man Charles would begin to sing.

I was right, he did. At the first discordant note I

rose noiselessly from my haunches and slipped away in the direction that the little man had taken. I had three reasons for doing this. I had gathered that this stranger was prepared to offer me a home; I wanted to smell that stuff upon his handkerchief again; and thirdly, the man Charles had begun to sing. The man Charles' singing always makes me want ardently to wander from the neighbourhood.

Down the lane I saw the podgy figure of the small German through the deepening twilight. He was walking slowly, and I followed him steadily. We had not far to go, and we met no one on the way. At a door in a high brick wall I found him waiting for me, and he led me through a garden into a high bare sort of building standing alone. I was not at all nervous of him, I remember. My instinct was quite useless with this man. He had a curious kind of attraction for me that I could not resist, and the stuff on his handkerchief drew me strongly. He patted me kindly and opened the door of a small but comfortable cage. I climbed in and found some straw and a good supper awaiting me. When I had made a hearty meal I went to sleep.

I am a heavy sleeper. When I awoke it was broad daylight, and two people were standing in front of my

cage. One of them was the tall, fleshy young German—and the other was a girl human. I had never seen her before, but, my fur and teeth, that had been *my* loss! She was charming, simply charming; tall and slight, with dark eyes and hair, and a quick lively sort of face that contrasted very favourably with the stolid German beside her. I had conceived a certain prejudice against *him*.

"What is he here for?" the girl was saying, pointing to me, and her voice, a very pretty voice it was, sounded as though she was angry and almost frightened.

"Your grandfader, your so revered grandfader, has him here brought," the German explained. "The servants are nod of him to know."

The girl shook her small white hands in the air with a helpless kind of gesture.

"But why—why?" she asked. "Is it—is it to—use him like—like the other pets?"

The German nodded.

"Id his business is," he said stolidly. "But I so subbose. Id is him to aid in his so imbortant scientific exberiments."

To my amazement the girl pulled out a small handkerchief and began to cry.

"Oh ! it is wrong—wrong and cruel !" she said, and I began to get a little nervous. "No good can come of it all, no good at all. I believe that my grandfather is mad !"

I grew distinctly more nervous. I have met one or two mad people in my time, and they are not soothing people to deal with.

"He is one man of genius," the young man said quietly. "He quite soon world-famous will be, and I, his faithful nephew, will his honours share."

The girl dropped her handkerchief and turned upon him fiercely.

"You are welcome to them !" she snapped. "But there is one thing of his you will not share. And that is his grand-daughter ! I can't endure to look at that poor darling of a bear, and to listen to your talk of science ! Oh ! I hate your cruelty—I hate both my grandfather and you !"

And with that she turned and ran out of the room. The German stared for a moment with his mouth foolishly open ; then he said something entirely wrong to himself in his own hideous language and slowly followed her.

I was left to my thoughts, which were somewhat anxious. Some horrible mystery seemed to lie behind

what I had heard. What had I been brought there for ? And how had those "other pets" been used, of which the girl had spoken ? And what was this science they talked about ? I did not know the word, but the very vagueness of it frightened me. Oh ! I can assure you that I began not to enjoy my position at all !

I looked about me. I was in one-half of a kind of lofty shed, lighted by skylights. Two folding-doors cut off the other half. In one corner of the room were what looked liked a dog-kennel and one or two rabbit-hutches. I had nothing much to go upon, but I was conscious of a horrid kind of dread in my inside.

And then the little Professor came bustling in with my breakfast, and he beamed upon me so genially through his big glasses, and he spoke to me so kindly with his ugly accent, that I quite forgot my fears. I could not believe that this man was capable of cruelty, and I was ready to hope that I had found a safe and comfortable home at last. Well, I was wrong, horribly wrong, but my nature, despite the efforts of Henri and Charles, will always be a trusting one.

However, that very morning I received another shock. The Professor was gazing at me affectionately through the bars, when his nephew entered hurriedly.

"A *frau* from the village is without, mine ungle," he explained; "and ubon sbeech with you insists."

The professor appeared annoyed.

"Ten thousand *teufels*!" he exclaimed. "What now? Will dese women never deir droubling cease?"

"Id is about a liddle brown mongrel he dog which she has for dese two days missed," his nephew told him.

The professor instantly darted with amazing agility to the kennel in the corner, snatched from it a small sleepy brown cur, and carried it at a run to the folding-doors. He put it through them, and just as he drew them together again a voice came from the door at the other end.

"I *will* see that Professor man for myself, and nothing, no German on this earth, sha'n't prevent me, young man, so there!" it said, and a female entered.

She was a tall, stout woman, unmistakably English.

"'E was seen outside 'ere!" she said shrilly. "'E was seen outside 'ere, and I believe as 'ow you know where 'e is!"

"Know where who is, my good *frau*?" asked the Professor blandly. He seemed an accomplished actor.

"My little Fido, my little brown Fido! Oh! give 'im back to me, and I won't say no more about it!"

The German waved his hands.

"My good *frau*——" he began, but the woman interrupted him.

"If you calls me your good *fraw*, or any other outlandish name agin, I may forget my woman'ood!" she said fiercely. "I aint *your* anything, but you've got something of mine, I do believe!"

The Professor seemed a little nervous.

"I have not your liddle Fido got, my good——" he began and then checked himself. "I have not him seen; he is to me of no inderest!"

It was at that moment that Fido began to scratch on the other side of the folding-doors!

"That's 'im, I believe!" screamed the woman. "You stole 'im, you German villing! There's queer tales about you in the village. Many's the good little dawg and cat that 'as been missing since you came! Open them doors, you rascil!"

The small Professor came close to her on tiptoe.

"Dey shall be obened at once if you will," he said in a kind of hissing whisper. "But behind dem is someding horrible, someding you should not see! I am much of it mineself afraid. But shall you see it, if you wish!"

The big woman moved sharply away from him with a kind of frightened gasp.

"Not—not for minted gold!" she said. "I aint as strong as I looks, and I can't abear shocks. You 'orrid little man, you ought to be stopped and took up by the perlice! There's something gashly about you, and I wouldn't stop in this 'ouse with you for anything!"

"Good morning, den, madam!" remarked the Professor affably. "Fritz, you may show de lady oud, now dat she knows her liddle Fido not here is!"

And she seemed relieved to go. As for the Professor, he chuckled happily and carried Fido gently back to his kennel.

But I couldn't help asking myself all the rest of the day what had become of the missing cats and dogs, what would become of Fido, and, above all, what would become of me? I will not attempt to conceal the fact that it was this last question that troubled me most.

And within a few hours—oh! it makes me cold even now to think of it!—these questions were answered. I woke in the middle of the night with a bright glare in my eyes and a horrid scream ringing in my ears. One of the folding-doors was open so that I was able to see through it. I wonder if ever a decent harmless bear has looked upon such a terrifying sight before!

The Professor was standing sideways to me in the

far room, and was bending over a table. Before him I could see the little brown body of Fido. It appeared to be tied down, and from it there came a succession of dreadful shrieks. *The Professor was doing something horrible to him with a little shining knife!*

I did not look for long. I gave a kind of deep choke of fear and rage, and the Professor heard it. He looked up quickly from his cruel work, and appeared to be surprised and annoyed that the door was open. Anyhow, he shut it hastily. It must have been sound-proof, for after that I heard nothing—thank goodness!

But I had heard and seen enough. I knew now what I was there for. I knew it too well. The Professor, that good-tempered little man, wanted to get *me* upon that table, wanted to huggle *me* with that shining knife! I did not know or care why he wanted to do this, but the mere thought of it made me feel ill. I felt a hatred for that little man beside which my feelings for Henri and Charles were purely affectionate. If I could have got my paws round him at that moment he would have murdered no more dogs! I *did* throw myself against the bars, but they were too strong for me. I lay there, thinking of my own wretched helplessness, until weariness overcame me and I slept or swooned.

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When I awoke the thought of my awful position came back to me at once and I groaned aloud. That groan was answered by a little sob. The dark-haired girl was kneeling in front of my cage looking at me with wet eyes.

"Oh! you poor thing!" she said softly. "You poor brown furry thing! If only I could do something to help you!"

I was grateful for her sympathy, but her stupidity annoyed me. She had only to unlock my cage door, and I would do the rest. It would not be that little demon of a Professor or his nephew who would stop me! But apparently this obvious course did not occur to her.

"I can't bear to think about it!" she murmured; and I cannot say that I found her conversation very cheering. "No one who was not mad or wicked could hurt anything so big and round and good-natured as you. I wonder if you would let me kiss you."

"Will I not instead do?" asked a voice, and that horrid plump young German entered. The girl sprang to her feet with bright eyes and a very pretty colour in her cheeks.

"You!" she said scornfully. "Why, I *hate* you!"

You know what I think about this cruelty, and yet you go on helping my wicked mad grandfather ! I would not let you kiss me for—for anything !”

The German shrugged his fat shoulders unhappily.

“What may I do ?” he asked. “I must my so revered ungle obey ! And dis bear is but an animal after all—he will not long suffer.”

The girl stamped a small foot.

“Oh ! you—I have no patience with you !” she cried. “But perhaps if I was all German like you I might think differently ! When—when is it to be ?”

“To-night,” the young man answered. “I am someding in his food to give him which will make him for a while so soundly sleep.”

You can imagine how pleasant it was for me to lie and listen to this sort of thing ! Humans never seem to realise that we can understand their horrid language. I was shaking all over as I lay.

The girl thought for a moment with her forehead wrinkled.

“Fritz,” she said at last in a different voice, “you have told me several times that you—are fond of me.”

“Ach, yes !” said the German eagerly. “Id is so ! Dare is a bassion inside me here which all me up burns !”

And he laid a large hand upon his waistcoat.

"Well," said the girl hesitatingly, "I don't promise you anything at all, but I think that perhaps I would let you—kiss me—once, if you will do what I ask."

"Ach! what may I den do?" asked the young man.

"You can get the key of the cage from my grandfather without him suspecting anything, and let this poor bear go," said the girl deliberately, and I recognised that I had wronged her. "It will be best to do so, for I hear that two men in the village are hunting everywhere for him."

"Ach! I dare not id do," the German said. "He is one terrible man, your grandfader, and I may not his fierce rage face!"

"You are a coward!" the girl cried. "Oh! I am *thankful* that I am mostly English! But if you won't do *that*, at any rate you can only pretend to give him the stuff to make him sleep. Then he will have some chance at least."

The German pondered, breathing heavily in his excitement.

"I will id do!" he muttered at last. "I will my so revered ungle deceive, if I may you once kiss!"

The girl made a charming little face of disgust.

"You promise?" she asked.

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"Ach ! yes, I bromise !" cried the German eagerly.

"Then—then be quick and get it over!" she whispered, and offered a small portion of her cheek. She might have been taking very horrid physic. I was in no state for critical observation, but I recognised what she felt, and I hope the German did also. But I doubt it.

When he had received his price she wrenched away from him and ran from the room with a scarlet face, and I prepared to get through the rest of that awful endless day as best I could.

It must have been about midnight when I heard the noise of wheels and knew that those two murderous Germans were coming for their victim. Through my half-closed eyes I could see that they were pushing a kind of low truck before them. I was stretched upon the floor of my cage, partly because I was almost in a state of collapse despite my high courage, and partly because I hoped to put them off their guard.

"De drug has its work done," I heard the Professor say. "He will be heavy to ubon de table get."

Thank goodness, with the actual coming of the peril, all my nerve seemed to come back to me! I heard the

click of the key in the lock, and then, as the door swung open, I hurled myself through it like a bursting shell !

I sent both those Germans reeling, but I did not happen to strike either of them fairly. I wish fervently that I *had* done so. My gentle harmless nature is well known to you, but just then I was not inclined to mildness. Nor do I think, even now, that they deserved it. I fell when I landed, and my eyes were dazzled by the lights. As I scrambled to my feet I saw the Professor making for the outer door, and with a fierce shuffling rush I cut off his retreat. "De cage—make for de cage !" I heard the young German yell, and the Professor heard it also. We were almost within hugging distance of each other (and there would have been no mistake about my side of the embrace, I promise you !), but the little man pulled off his coat and threw it over my head. When I had dragged the horrid thing off, and had torn it to shreds, I was maddened to find that both my enemies were safe within my cage.

I shambled up to it and dragged at the door with my full strength, but the spring lock held.

"De drug—what of de drug ?" the Professor was saying in puzzled anger. "Fritz, you dold me dat you had it him given ! Why, den, is dis mad bear not in beaceful slumber sdretched ?"

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"Mine ungle, ubon his so huge carcasse de most bowerful drug must its sdrength waste," Fritz answered with mendacious sadness. "Yet must we hope dat soon it may effect dake."

"I too so hope," said the Professor shortly, and he dragged a huge pipe from his trousers pocket and lit it. "De exeriment has very nearly one so valuable life gost."

"Two valuable lives, mine ungle!" Fritz said in surprised correction.

"But one, Fritz," the Professor repeated firmly. "Had your young life gut off been by dis mad bear, it had been sad, berhaps, but noding more."

I did not catch Fritz's answer. I was half mad to think that these wicked men had escaped me, and were squatting there in comfort. There seemed only one way of expressing my annoyance, and I took it. I raged round the great room, hitting out like a maniac, and really I do not think that any one could have done more damage in the time than I did. I say it with all modesty, but I fancy that I broke everything that was breakable.

The process was a noisy one, and besides I was roaring with baffled rage most of the time. I realised at last that many people were beating upon the locked

outer door, and, as I turned, it gave before them and they poured into the great room.

There must have been twenty of them at least, some of them only half dressed. There were Henri and Charles, there was the female owner of poor Fido, there was the village *gendarme* and many others. And they were all yelling at the top of their voices.

They took in the meaning of the scene instantly, and I will say for them that their rage was almost equal to mine. Henri and Charles in particular, when they recognised the two harmless simple Germans who had spoken to them so politely about bears, became entirely inarticulate. Nothing, indeed, but the bars of the cage saved those two murderers from immediate assault.

"*Gendarme!*" screamed Henri, when he could speak intelligibly. "I order, I demand, I insist zat you arrest zese men! Zey 'ave stolen zis bear, zis good Joseph, and eef zare ees law in zis 'ateful England zey shall be most frightfully punished!"

"And I gives 'em in charge, too!" yelled a voice hoarse with rage and emotion. It belonged to the indignant female. She had daringly penetrated into the inner room, and now she held in her shaking hand a portion of brown skin. "They've murdered my poor

Fido, and 'ere's all that's left of 'im ! Oh ! let me only get at 'em that I may argufy with 'em ! ”

“ You 'ears what they say,” said the village *gendarme* heavily to the two Germans. “ I calls on you to come out and be harrested ! ”

The Professor blew a cloud of smoke from his pipe, and held out his hand for silence. He was a fiend, but he was certainly brave. “ I have de key of dis cage, boliceman,” he said calmly. “ Id shall nod be obened until dese so excited beople and dat so mad bear are removed. I do nod understand deir grievance, but id would nod be right my so valuable life to risk ! ”

The crowd perceived in time that nothing short of gunpowder would alter his decision. We all trooped out together, I in the charge of my two masters, and, although I do not exactly know what happened, I have reason to believe that the Professor and his nephew were duly punished later. But I can't help wishing that their punishment had been left to *me*, or to Henri and Charles—or, better still, to that excited female !

IX

IN WHICH HE ASSISTS AT A RIVER PICNIC

HENRI and Charles had tied me to a gate-post, whilst they went up to beg a draught of any fluid except water at a farmhouse. When they were out of sight the full bitterness and degradation of my position came over me. For about the hundredth time I decided irrevocably that I would be a tormented captive no longer. Acting upon this not ignoble thought I stood end on to the gate-post and dragged. The chain did not give, I had not expected it to do so, but something else, even more gratifying, happened. There was a sharp hot pain at my neck, I had the feeling that *all* the hairs in my body were being dragged out, and then—oh! joy, my collar slid over my small shapely ears, and I was free. Nor was this all. In its passage it had removed my muzzle, and for the first time for weeks I felt my own bear again. I shook myself with one deep grunt of triumphant gratitude, and set out

without delay upon my travels. It pleased me to imagine the feelings of my masters, when they should return to find a chain and an empty muzzle attached to the gate-post !

It was early in the morning of a gorgeous summer day. The sky was blue, and the sun was shining warmly. Yes, I know it sounds absurd, here in England, but it is a fact. When I had covered a mile or so briskly, I crossed a field, scrambled through a horridly prickly hedge, and found myself in a big garden.

No one seemed about, and I wandered along the gravel paths, admiring the unselfish labours of the bees and wondering whereabouts their hive might be, until I came to a kind of bower place covered with crimson roses. I could hear the murmur of voices from within, and I proceeded towards it with admirable caution. When I had gained the back I crouched down and was able to peer through an opening in the leaves.

I had been right, as usual. There *was* a girl in the bower. That was why I had gone to look instead of at once retreating. Girl humans as a rule are to be depended upon for kindness when a decent, harmless, gentle bear is in question. Of course I can't answer for them in other respects.

This one was very pleasant to look at. I am no hand at description, but she had grey eyes and fair hair and an expression that struck me as being daintily wicked. Not that I believe there was any real harm in her. She was seated upon a chair of rough wood, and a young male human was leaning against a table beside her. He was not specially beautiful, but he was rather clean and wholesome-looking—after Henri and the man Charles !

"I expect if your father knew I was with you now there would be ructions !" he was saying rather gloomily.

"I am sure there would be !" the girl agreed with impish brightness.

"In fact," the young man continued morosely, "I can't understand in the least why I've been allowed to have this five minutes' talk with you !"

"You've been talking for half an hour," the girl commented, "and father *thinks* I'm gathering flowers. I hardly know why I'm not," she added thoughtfully.

"Why does he dislike me so frightfully, do you think ?" the man asked.

"I'm afraid he considers you're not nearly good enough for me," the girl answered solemnly, but I believe she nearly smiled.

"I'm not, I know," the young man said with depressed modesty. "But I don't believe that any other man could be, you know."

And then the girl laughed outright.

"It isn't really that father has such an exalted opinion of *me*," she declared. "It is that he can't imagine any young man being worthy to be *his* son-in-law. It is opposed to all his ideas of discipline."

"I wish you weren't the daughter of a retired naval captain, Madge," the young male human said sadly.

"It wasn't my fault, Dickie—really!" the girl answered with mock seriousness. "Now *I'm* not complaining in the least about *your* parent. And, to do father justice, he doesn't either!"

"No," agreed Dickie, "he doesn't. I wouldn't mind betting sixpence that they're together now. The mater's just about due for this water picnic."

"They *are* very often together," Madge said thoughtfully. "But father would be simply furious to hear me say as much. I ventured to chaff him delicately about it the other day."

"What did he say?" Dickie asked curiously. "I think you're just about the bravest person I know, Madge!"

"He said a great deal, Dickie—a *very* great deal!"

And, Dickie—I was really quite thankful that I'm much too old now to be—er—smacked !”

Dickie whistled.

“He *couldn't* have been so—so—sacrilegious !” he stated fervently. “But he is a tyrant, and no mistake, Madge darling. And it's just his tyranny and love of discipline that are going to spoil to-day's picnic. I am very fond of my mother, but I can't see why *I* am bound to row *her* !”

“And I,” said Madge solemnly, “am very fond of my father, but I can't see why *he* should be bound to row *me* !”

“They would be much happier together !” Dickie said. “And so I am sure should we. I'll tell you what, Madge, why shouldn't you and I make a mistake about the time or something, and cut away together now ?”

“There would be a dreadful row,” Madge said hesitatingly ; and then, “Oh, Dickie, there's father's voice, and he's coming this way !”

Dickie appeared to listen.

“Yes, and he's blowing up one of the gardeners, apparently,” he said firmly. “Madge, darling, he's in an evil temper and you're mine, or you will be one day—I simply decline to risk you with him in a small boat

this morning ! Anything might happen ! You and I will slip off at once."

They got up to go, and I also moved nervously away. I had no wish to encounter the owner of the voice that was steadily growing louder. But I could not tell how many people were about, and so I judged it well to lie down behind a bush at the corner of the path. To my horror I recognised in a minute that this infuriated naval officer was coming right towards me. I heard steps and his voice again. It would indeed have been difficult to avoid hearing *that*.

"Don't answer me, Higgins!" he was bellowing. "Don't dare to argue with me, man ! I say again that this garden is kept like a huge pig-sty, that any decent self-respecting pig, indeed, would resolutely decline to live in it ! Did I not definitely order you to have those beds dug up ? Did I not say it was to be done ? Answer me, man, if you've got a tongue in your head !"

"Yes, sir, you did," said another voice.

"Then Great Jupiter ! why, why, why was it not done ?"

"Because next day you changed your mind and counter-ordered it, sir !"

"Oh, ah ! Well, if I did I probably had good reasons

for it. Don't you presume to argue again with me, Higgins! Great Zeus! what in the world is that?"

Three people had come round the corner of the path and had seen me. One was a roughly dressed man carrying a pitchfork and wearing a slightly dazed expression, one was a rather pleasant-looking middle-aged female human, and the third—well, I had no difficulty in identifying *him* as the angry speaker. He was tall and upright, with a brown, clean-shaven face; he had very bright irascible eyes—but I think on the whole that his voice was the most striking thing about him. It was quite an unusual voice. It suggested the bellowing of an annoyed bull, and it might have been heard half a mile away. Something about the man cowed even me for a moment, and I could only lie there shaking.

"Ye gods!" screamed the Captain. "Not content, Higgins, with keeping my garden like the fo'c's'le of a tramp, you must also litter it up with bears—with bears, by Heaven! What do you mean by it, you slovenly ruffian?"

The lady appeared frightened by my appearance, and as for Higgins, his large mouth was open with astonishment.

"Is—is there more than one, sir?" he asked

M

foolishly, apparently bewildered by the Captain's exaggerative style of conversation. "Anyways, I didn't bring 'em 'ere!"

The Captain began literally to dance upon the gravel.

"Don't stand there talking nonsense and arguing with me, Higgins!" he roared. "Call up your men with spades and pitchforks and drive this trespassing creature from my grounds!"

As he spoke he snatched the pitchfork from Higgins' hand, and made a sudden dangerous rush towards me. As he advanced my strength came back to me, mercifully, and with a stifled cry I fled for my life.

That chase is not a cheerful memory to me. It was far too hot to be pleasant. I heard Higgins whistle shrilly, and soon three other ruffians had joined the pursuit. As for that Captain, he was like a ferocious tiger hungry for blood. Had the other four possessed his cruel spirit I am convinced that you would never have heard this story. I can see him now, close upon my heels, brandishing his pitchfork and uttering strange and terrible cries. Up and down the paths and across the lawns we tore, and several times it appeared as though I *must* be cut off. But the hireling gardeners invariably failed at the pinch, drawing back before my

frenzied flight, and in a little while it appeared that even the captain's condition was inferior to his ardour and his rage. He began to pant and gasp, and even his voice lost its first sharp freshness. In a big kind of shrubbery I temporarily shook off the pursuit, and when I emerged from the trees I found myself to my surprise upon the bank of a river.

I looked about me desperately. The water seemed to cut off my retreat, for I should have to be hard pushed indeed to swim. I was almost choking with the strain and agony of my flight ; and I recognised that I must find a hiding-place at any cost. A boat, a light, brown, varnished boat, was moored against the bank. It struck me suddenly that here would be the last place where my ferocious pursuers would think of finding me. I did not hesitate. I boarded the thing at some risk, owing to its absurd tendency to turn bottom upwards, and crouched thankfully down in the front part beneath a heap of white canvas.

How long I lay there I do not know. I heard the yells of my pursuers die away, and realised with a glow of pride that my speed and cunning had saved me for a time at least. I was just thinking of rising and resuming my flight, when—oh, horror ! I heard steps and voices !

There was no mistaking one of those voices. It belonged to that terrible naval Captain, and he was not what I should call a silent man. As usual, he appeared to be annoyed. Flight was useless, but I shook so much as I lay there that I feared lest I should upset that rotten boat. I could, of course, see nothing, but this is what I heard.

"Humph! so the other boat's gone! Can it be, Mrs. Dagenham, that against my express injunctions my daughter has accompanied your son!"

"I am really afraid they *have* gone on, Captain Wrathall. They must have misunderstood the arrangement!"

The Captain muttered something to himself which sounded to me like, "Misunderstood be sugared!" He also snorted. Then he turned upon the menial Higgins, who, it seemed, was also present.

"Confound it all, Higgins, why don't you hold the boat for us to get in? What do you think you're here for! If it is for ornamental purposes, then allow me to say that you fail grossly!"

I felt the boat drawn close to the bank, and again I shivered so that the canvas above me rustled. They were going to get in! I felt that if I were discovered my death would not be an easy one. The Captain

grumbled perpetually—about his disobedient daughter, about the clumsiness of Higgins, and most of all about the balance of the boat. Certainly my weight had sunk the front part quite noticeably before they got in. But mercifully it did not occur to them to look under my canvas.

At last I felt the boat pushed out, and I heard a creaking sound as the Captain began to row. He hurled one last insult at Higgins, who, I gathered, was standing and gazing dreamily after his employer, and then began one of the most anxious and nerve-trying experiences of my chequered but blameless career. I simply did not care to *think* about what would happen if my presence were discovered. The least painful solution seemed to point to the certainty of the Captain upsetting the boat in his wild rage. And even this prospect did not cheer me. I detest water. Even for drinking purposes I consider it to be overrated.

I was already beginning to get horribly stiff and cramped. And yet through all my misery and anxiety the Captain's steady voice penetrated.

"I wonder what became of that miserable bear!" he remarked venomously. "If I could have caught him, I should have certainly killed him with my pitchfork!"

I shuddered as I lay there and listened to the man's undiminished ferocity.

"Confound that man Higgins!" he continued. "This boat is most abominably down by the head! I blame him for it entirely. Why I am so patient and long-suffering with him I hardly know! And I am seriously annoyed about that fool of a daughter of mine, and that—ahem! that son of your's, Mrs. Dagenham!"

"Oh! I don't think they'll come to any harm! I quite expect they are waiting for us up the backwater."

"We'll look when we get there. But what I mean is that I'll be bound that they are getting up to some infernal nonsense together!"

"Would it be such a very disastrous thing if they were, Captain Wrathall?"

"It would leave me abominably lonely, as I have often pointed out to you, Mrs. Dagenham. No one to speak to at all, not even one's fool of a daughter!"

After which there fell a silence, broken only by the steady grumbling of the Captain about my weight in the bows. He did not, of course, know that it *was* my weight, thank goodness! At last I heard him say;

"Here's the backwater! I'll push in to the bank,

and walk along and see if they are up it. Confound this current! it's quite a job to turn across it!"

I felt the boat touch land and spring up as the Captain quitted it. I heard his footsteps recede, and then—suddenly I realised that we were moving! Almost simultaneously. I heard a sharp scream from my fellow passenger.

"Captain Wrathall, Captain Wrathall! Come quickly, we're drifting!" I ventured to peep from under the canvas. We were some feet from the bank and drifting steadily with the stream. And the wind was taking us further out every moment. We must have been twenty yards from land when I heard the Captain's hail.

"Get out the oars, Mrs. Dagenham! You can easily pull her in again!"

"But I can't row!" screamed Mrs. Dagenham.
"What shall I do?"

"Then sit tight!" called the Captain very calmly.
"You are sure to meet a boat soon."

He was apparently walking along the bank beside us as we went. For some minutes nothing happened, and then I heard a fervent ejaculation from the Captain only half drowned by a piercing scream from the lady.

"Oh heavens ! the weir ! What can I do, I shall be drowned !"

And at that I judged it absolutely vital to see for myself what was happening. I pushed aside the canvas and sat up, blinking about me. Never so long as I live shall I forget the terrified wail or the roar of naval rage that greeted my appearance !

"It's that—that insolent, pestilential bear !" raved the Captain. "I can hardly trust myself to speak about him ! But do not despair, dear Mrs. Dagenham, I think even at this distance I can cow him !"

"Oh ! what am I to do ?" sobbed Mrs. Dagenham, who, I was sorry to see, had quite broken down. She did not appear to find the Captain's braggart assurance at all convincing. "If I stay here I must be drowned or devoured, and if I plunge into the water I cannot swim !"

I had wronged the Captain, it seemed. I had fancied that he feared the water or myself, but now it appeared that his hesitation had been only caused by vanity.

"I've got a new suit on, dash it all !" I heard him growl to himself. "But it can't be helped, I suppose ! Sit tight for just a moment, my dear lady, and I'll swim out to you."

And he was as good as his word. He plunged in

head first in quite masterly style, and Mrs. Dagenham and I watched his splashing, panting approach. Personally, I was compelled to regard his progress with mingled feelings. I was glad on Mrs. Dagenham's account, and I had no fancy myself for being drowned in the weir or for taking to the water to prevent such a horrid fate ; but on the other hand I could not anticipate an exactly cordial interview with the ever irascible and now justly angered Captain. Still, the man would be practically single-handed, and I hoped to be able to hold my own with him if he had not any lethal weapon concealed about his person.

In a minute or two he gripped the side of the boat, and, having instructed my fellow passenger to balance him, he scrambled aboard with amazing agility. I am sure *I* could not have done it without overturning the boat. He was, of course, dripping wet, and he would undoubtedly have endeavoured to vent his rage upon my person, possibly with an oar, had not a surprising thing happened. For Mrs. Dagenham, still sobbing violently, caught his wet arm with both her hands and seemed unable to let it go.

"Oh ! it was brave and good of you !" she cried shakily. "I think I should have gone mad with fear if you had not come !"

The Captain appeared to view her action with some complacent pleasure. He measured our distance from the weir with his eye, and seemed to think that he had a minute or two to spare. At any rate he sat down in the back part of the boat beside Mrs. Dagenham. He also took her hand from his arm and held it in his own.

"Mrs. Dagenham—Dorothy!" he said, and I should as soon have expected a tiger to speak with tenderness! "I've asked you on ten separate occasions to marry me. Do you really mean that you have thought better of your ten separate refusals?"

"Oh yes, I suppose so," Mrs. Dagenham murmured. "You've saved my life—and—and—yes, I'll marry you—if—if Madge has accepted Dickie!"

The Captain appeared surprised, but on the whole contented. And after that you are to imagine a staid, respectable bear squatting in the front of the boat, and eyeing with cold disdain the extremely foolish actions of two middle-aged humans. I was at last forced to turn my eyes right away from them in sheer disgust—and what I saw made me almost faint with horror. We were within a hundred yards of the foaming, tumbling water of the weir, and yet those mad foolish humans were embracing each other quite oblivious of

our peril ! I stamped upon the floor and moaned, but I entirely failed to awake them to a sense of our position. The Captain just addressed me without looking up.

"Be still, sir, can't you ! If you aren't instantly quiet I'll flog you soundly with my own hands when we get ashore !"

Vain, boastful, impertinent human ! And all the while that dreadful white water was drawing nearer ! I was just thinking about taking a header for safety, when there was a yell and another boat with Madge and Dickie in it shot into view.

"Row, you old fool !" screamed Dickie. "The weir, the weir ! You're on the weir !"

I will say that the Captain was prompt enough when once awakened. He just swore once, and then—he was in his seat and the oars were out ! The current was strong and we were hideously near the edge of the weir, but with all his faults (and I should be the last to underrate them) he must have been a good rower. He strained desperately at the oars, and very slowly our boat swung to the right and into the smooth channel. As we drew up against the bank, all three of us panting with relief, Dickie and Madge came alongside in their boat.

"What on earth have you been doing, Captain

Wrathall?" Dickie asked in astonishment. "You're wet through, and you've got a great bear in your boat—and—and you seemed too—*busy* to know that you were within a few feet of the weir!"

The Captain looked at him with an entirely solemn face.

"Don't ask so many questions, my young friend," he said. "You called me an old fool just now, but I overlook your impudence in view of the fact that you saved our lives, I suppose. And now—what do you mean by going on ahead with my daughter?"

Dickie squared his shoulders and looked the terrible man full in the eye. The front part of our boat had swung out again, otherwise I should certainly have landed and taken to my heels. As it was, I had to stay.

"I did it because I wanted to persuade your daughter to marry me," he said firmly. "I've asked her several times before. This time, I'm glad to say, she said she would, on one condition."

"And what was that, sir?" asked the Captain sternly.

Dickie looked confused.

"Er—if—if you married—again yourself, and had some one to look after you," he said.

Mrs. Dagenham gave a little gasping laugh. The

Captain frowned, then he seemed on the point of choking, and then he laughed.

"Then the condition is fulfilled," he said. "Your mother, you unprincipled young ruffian, has agreed to marry me!"

"I gathered as much," Dickie said calmly, "from the way you were occupied outside that weir. . . . May I congratulate you?"

Then there were general and confused congratulations, and a certain amount of kissing. The Captain was the first to recover himself. He looked sternly at his drying but ruined clothes, and then fixed me with that eye of his.

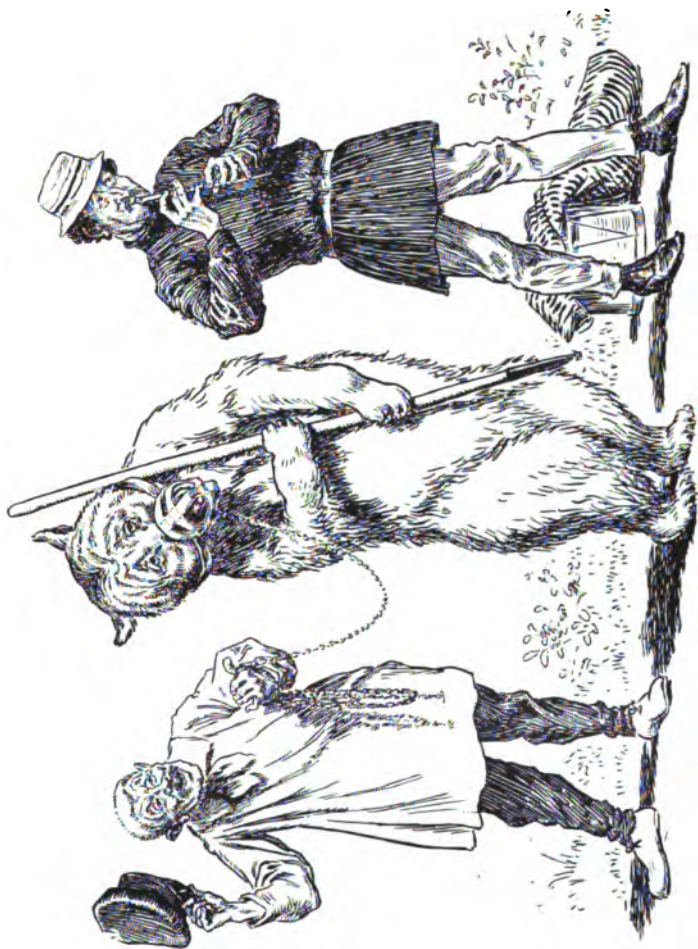
"That bear has done a good turn for me to-day, I fancy," he said thoughtfully. "And yet I find it difficult to overlook the essential impertinence of the animal. And be hanged if I know what to do with the creature!"

"Oh! that reminds me!" Dickie exclaimed. "The rest of the picnic are waiting for us round the bend, and there are two French criminals hanging round to dance and make themselves generally tiresome, who lament that they have lost their bear. I take it this engaging quadruped belongs to them."

"Then we'll go right on and deliver him," the

Captain declared. "No—I'm *not* wet, and I decline, simply decline, to go back and change! It's to be hoped some one has had the sense to bring some whisky, though! Come on, and let's get rid of this ursine encumbrance!"

And that, I am sorry to say, is what they did. I tried to convey by my manner that I would infinitely rather be put ashore, if it was all the same to them, but my hints were entirely wasted upon the harsh obtuseness of that naval captain. My appearance in the front of his boat appeared to fill the waiting picnickers with hilarious amazement, but the incoherent joy of Henri and the man Charles explained the matter to them. I seemed the one creature present who was not pleased and delighted, and my only satisfaction lay in the contemplation of the Captain's damp stickiness, and in declining firmly to do justice to my powers in the performance that my masters instantly began.



Henri and Charles with Joseph.

X

IN WHICH HE TAKES A PAINFUL SEA VOYAGE

I *HAVE* found one good quality in you humans. Yes, I really have! But don't let this praise excite you or make you unduly vain, because you have a good many horrid characteristics to set against that one. However, you prove that you are really brave—*by your habit of going for pleasure trips upon the sea*. Pleasure trips—oh my goodness! And what constitutions you must have to stand them! I have never forgotten my first crossing from France to England—it has always been a black, hideous memory, and I had quite determined to make it my business to die over here rather than risk such an experience again. But quite accidentally I have since had another sea voyage. Let me tell you about it, quite unselfishly—because for my part I should like to try and forget it.

I won't trouble you with an account of my escape from my masters, because on this occasion it involved

some little violence—and violence has always been thoroughly distasteful to me. It will be enough to say that I *did* escape from them, minus my muzzle, and that I found myself upon that lovely summer evening crouching, slightly exhausted, in a dry ditch near a stile. And later, when I awoke from a short, refreshing doze, two humans were sitting in the twilight upon the stile. Need I say, bearing the circumstances in mind, that they were a male and a female? Or that it was the latter who happened to be speaking?

“Yes, I quite think you mean well and try to please me, George,” she was saying brightly, with a not displeasing broad kind of accent. “I’m only sorry that you ain’t more successful.”

“It’s a little bit hard like to know exackly what you want, Janet,” the male answered sorrowfully.

“You’re straight and good-tempered and all that,” Janet said reflectively. “But I should like to see you more what I call romantical.”

George appeared to groan.

“I done my very best, Janet,” he said miserably. “I’m sure I’m quite ashamed myself of this here tie that I’ve put on specially to try and please you!”

“It is loudish, although I don’t actually dislike the colouring,” Janet remarked critically. “But ties and

hair-grease and all that ain't romance, George. They're just dressiness and a proper pride in your appearance."

"Oh Lor, I then what is romance?" George asked desperately.

"It's—it's what you read about in books," Janet answered doubtfully. "It's—it's chivalry—and, and—killing things for the sake of your lady."

"Well, I killed a pig only yesterday," George said more brightly. "Mrs. Calder, she told me to. And I suppose she's my lady?"

"Not a bit of it!" Janet said crossly. "She's just the fat wife of the farmer you work for. I'm your dear lady—or I might be if I could put up with your stoopidity. As it is, I really think I'll have to be Ernest Browner's. He seems to understand my higher moods and aspeerations better than what you do, George."

"Then I'll just punch his fat head anyways!" George declared sullenly. "I think I'll start by half killing *him*, just to get my hand in for the chivalry business. I dunno if that's what you want, Janet."

"You're a great stupid!" Janet said sharply, but in a gratified sort of voice. "Don't you dare to touch him. And see that you behave decent and civil to him to-morrow on the steamer, George."

"What, is *he* going to be there too?" George asked disgustedly.

"Yes, of course he is. It's not *my* fault if he can't keep away from where I am. Besides, half the village are going the trip. And perhaps—perhaps I shall be able to make up my mind during the day which of you two I really prefer."

George said something to himself only half under his breath and threw himself down from the stile.

"You'll have to please yourself, of course, Janet," he said with a kind of dogged fury. "I ain't vain, but what you can see in that barber's dummy of an Ernest Browner beats me! And I don't think I can trust myself to stand here and talk about him with you."

Janet slid down from the stile. I could see her toss her head in the twilight.

"You can go where you please, George Dinham!" she exclaimed. "I'm going home now—alone!"

And they set off down the road—George walking sulkily some ten yards behind Janet. You humans—you humans! I am far from being conceited, but I am often filled with a kind of complacency as I consider your habits and customs. A few minutes later I left my ditch and walked down the road in the direction that these two had taken.

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In a little while I came to a largish cottage standing outside a village. I should not have noticed it but for the savoury smell that poured from the open door and filled my hungry heart with wild cravings. I *was* hungry—more ravenous even than usual. I hesitated for a moment, and then I made up my mind to trust to the shadowy chance of finding inside the cottage a kind-hearted and discerning human. That will show you how desperate I was! With this resolve I walked boldly into the front room and found that it was empty.

But almost instantly I heard a stern female voice.

"Is that you in the parlour with your dirty boots, Henery?" it asked.

And a voice from the garden at the back replied with just indignation, "No, it ain't!"

"Then who is it?" the first voice inquired. "Some idling busybody, I'll be bound, disturbing me at my work! I'll send them packing!"

And I heard steps approaching. I did not wait to encounter this angry female. Something told me that she would be neither kind-hearted nor discerning, so far as I was concerned. I was a little flustered, and did not make for the road as I should have been wise to do. Several doors led out of the room I was in.

pushed open one at random, and found myself in a room with a large bed in it. I promptly dived underneath it and lay down.

I thought I was safe, but in a moment I shuddered to hear footsteps on the threshold of my room. It was that wrathful female. I heard her mutter "'E came this way by the sound, drat 'im!" and then I broke into a cold perspiration of horror as she advanced towards the bed. She pulled up the white cloth that hung down and concealed me, and—stared full into my frightened, apologetic countenance!

Her scream yet rings in my ears. I wish it didn't. It set all my teeth on edge. She rushed back into the other room, screaming for Henery as she went, and I scrambled hurriedly out from under the bed. It struck me forcibly that this room would prove no place for me, supposing that Henery brought a pitchfork or some such unpleasant weapon with him. I thought of bursting out past the woman by the way I had entered (for I had quite lost my appetite for the moment), but then I saw to my joy that the window of the bedroom was open. My first shot for the aperture failed, but at the second my superb activity served me well, and I wriggled through at the cost of one slight but painful abrasion. I had only a few feet to fall, but I was some-

what shaken, and I crouched behind a gooseberry-bush for a minute to collect myself.

That woman's shrill voice came to me through the window.

"Under the bed! Under the bed! Oh, oh, oh, it's still there!"

"What is?" asked Henery's stolid voice.

"Some 'orrible 'airy animal like a bear! Oh the times I've looked under the bed for a burglar, and then to see that thing! I'm going to 'ave a spasim, Henery!"

"I shouldn't!" Henery answered with some cheerfulness. "'Ave a little gin instead!"

"Oh, I couldn't think of it. Well—just a drop! Yes, in the teacup—but what are you pouring out *two* lots for, Henery?"

"I reckon I want some myself, Martha," Henery answered firmly. "If so be as I'm to look under the bed. Not but what I don't believe you fancied it all!"

"May Heaven forgive you for those words, Henery Martin, for I don't think I ever can!" Martha exclaimed in a high solemn voice. "Fancied it, when I saw the creature with my own eyes as plain as plain! Go and look for yourself and take a pitchfork, you 'orrid unbelieving thing!"

Henery grunted, and I could hear his heavy boots coming nearer. I fancied that I detected a certain slow hesitancy in their thuds upon the floor. But a moment later he must have stooped and found nothing beneath the bed, for I heard his voice upraised in brisk triumph.

"I told you as 'ow you fancied it, Martha! There ain't nothing 'ere!"

"Nothing there!" screamed Martha, apparently rushing into the bedroom. "Why, I tell you I seed it! Well, Lord save us, Henery, this passes all! What can it mean—did it come as a warning?"

"Yes, to be sensible and give up silly fancies and girding at them as knows better!" Henery answered, not unkindly, but still with a kind of rare triumph. "My experience, Martha, is that I'm generally right!"

"No, you ain't. The thing *was* there. Yes, and it's gone climbing up the chimbley, after I startled it—or else through that open window. I hope it 'as gone that way, and not up the chimbley. We don't want it walking out upon us in the night!"

They both came to the window and looked out. But the dusk was thick and my gooseberry-bush concealed me bravely. When they had turned away, still

arguing, I got up and scrambled over a kind of low paling into the road.

I found myself in the village high street, and a moment later I received rather a severe shock. A door opened, emitting a stream of bright light and a full-bodied waft of alcohol, and half a dozen noisy men came out and saw me. One of them sank upon the ground with a kind of wail at sight of me, but the others raised a shrill view-halloo and next minute I was tearing for my life down the street in front of them. A kind of salt seaweedy smell was in my nostrils, and I knew that I was near the sea-shore. I was terribly afraid lest the water should cut off my retreat, but I thought it best to stick to the road. It was quite dark by now, and in a few seconds I found myself to my amazement upon a kind of short pier. I tore out to the end, with the whoops of my pursuers still in my ears, and discovered a plank which led to a huge, shadowy ship. I was almost desperate, and I crawled noiselessly along that plank.

Some one was singing unmusically to himself in the front part of the ship, but he had not heard me. I discovered a square hole in the deck (by stumbling into it in the dark and nearly breaking my neck), and I half fell, half climbed down some steep steps that led

into a gloomy cavern. There I crouched down, trembling violently for a while, until at last I went to sleep.

I had intended to leave that ship at daybreak, but, as I have done before in my career, I had the misfortune to oversleep myself. I was awakened at last by the noise of people trampling upon the deck above me, and by the sound of many chattering voices. There seemed to be hundreds of humans about, and I could not understand what was happening. I know now that the ship was what they call an excursion steamer, and that all these silly people had paid money for a day of torture aboard her. Fancy any one in their senses *paying* for that sort of thing !

But anyhow I recognised that it would not be safe for me to show myself at present. I never dreamed that the ship would start so soon, and I hoped to slip away when these annoying people had gone about their business. No one happened to come into the black hole where I was curled up, and I lay there patiently, wondering when I should next taste food. Not until I heard much shouting of orders and a kind of throbbing and splashing did I realise the fearful truth. The ship was moving, and whether I wished it or not I should have to make the voyage on her !

HE TAKES A PAINFUL SEA VOYAGE 201

I am just a little confused about all the subsequent proceedings of that agonising morning. In a few minutes the horrid ship began to jump up and down and—well, I won't dwell in any way upon my tortures. I just lay in that loathesome, black place, and wondered why I had been born and wished that I had not been. Oh! how I wished it! Soon, I fancy, I must have grown a trifle light-headed—at any rate I was suddenly filled with a wild hatred for the callous humans upon the deck above me, and the next thing that I remember is scrambling feebly up the steep ladder and poking my swimming head into the blessed fresh air.

For one moment I stared about me unnoticed. I saw several people whom I recognised. There was the woman Martha sitting comfortably beside a wretched, crumpled heap of clothes, which I fancied must be the man Henery. And there was the girl Janet, talking briskly to a loudly dressed young man whom I had never seen before, and entirely ignoring the unfortunate George, whom I recognised mainly by his tie. *That* was unmistakable, but his face had altered in quite a shocking fashion. It was now a bright green hue. These things I took in, and then a woman saw me and shrieked.

I dare say my appearance *was* a little ferocious and

startling. I had got it into my disordered mind that all the humans on board were responsible for my present sufferings, and I glared about me pretty savagely. I should not wonder in the least if my eyes were both wild and red at that moment. They felt it. But the scream that rose at sight of me was by no means general. Quite half the humans on deck, I noticed, appeared incapable of screaming. They seemed to be sharing my acute sufferings. They were gazing with haggard, longing eyes at the good firm land which could be seen across the horrid, uneven green waves.

I left the top of the ladder and began to stagger along the pitching, swaying deck. As I did so, the people got up from their seats, and reeled and scrambled away in front of me. All, that is, who *could* reel and scramble. Many seemed incapable of any movement, and could only gaze at me with dreary eyes. I took no notice of them. I was foolishly angry, I admit, but I was feeling much too ill for actual violence. Of course, the humans could not know this. I had no plan of action, but I noticed a fat, red-faced man, dressed in blue with a peaked cap, standing upon a kind of raised platform and twiddling a sort of wheel thing. And I took a dislike to him at once.

HE TAKES A PAINFUL SEA VOYAGE 203

It struck me that he looked the sort of man who would secure the best place for himself, and I determined to climb up beside him and try if his platform was less torturing than the deck. What I did to him then would depend upon his behaviour and my own state of health at the moment. He saw me coming towards him, and he began to shout orders to half a dozen queerly dressed men who were watching me from the sides of the deck.

"Head him off, you Dick, Bill, Harry!" he yelled. "What are you standing there for like stuffed dummies? Take him and heave him overboard, you cowardly lubbers! How am I to steer, if he climbs to the bridge?"

But the men did nothing definite. One or two of them made a kind of show of attacking me, but there was something in my manner that kept them at a distance. I advanced as steadily as my horrible weakness and dizziness would allow me, and I climbed slowly up the narrow steps that led to the platform. As I did so, the red-faced man in blue said several things about my appearance and character which struck me as being gratuitously insulting and annoying. Ordinarily I do not care what any ignorant human says about me, but just then I was unusually

irritable. As I gained the platform I struck out at the red-faced man with my right paw, and he promptly put his hand upon the railing and vaulted heavily down upon the deck. And so I found myself alone upon the high platform, looking down upon all those silly, upturned staring faces.

A kind of silence fell upon the people, and it was then that the woman Martha spoke. Through all that had passed she had never stirred from her comfortable seat. Now she lifted her umbrella and poked the heap of clothes beside her and addressed it in a loud, triumphant voice.

"Perhaps you'll believe me another time, Henery Martin! There's the very bear I found under the bed what you dared to say was fancy! He *did* get out of the window, and here he is again to shame your unbelievingness!"

Henery lifted a miserable, bright yellow face and glared at me. I think he tried to speak, but no sound came from his pale lips. He waved his hand at his wife with a kind of feeble anger, and then lay flat again.

The man in blue began to speak once more very noisily. He was calling for a gun, but, thank goodness, it appeared that there was nothing of the sort on

board. The wheel thing beside me was working up and down by itself, and the noise it made annoyed me. I noticed that we were moving in a kind of circle, but I did not care. I was feeling very bad indeed.

Then suddenly the throbbing sound stopped and the ship began to roll up and down without advancing. This movement was actually more painful than before. Several black-faced men peered through a hole in the deck, and whilst I stared at them I heard the girl Janet's shrill voice.

"Now's your chance, Ernest Browner!" she said eagerly. "Here's a chance for a man what is a man! Go you up them steps and subdue that bear in mortal combat, and no other man shall ever call me 'usband!"

"Yes," said the fat man in blue encouragingly, "you go and do what she tells you, my lad, and I'll shake 'ands with you myself!"

The loudly dressed young man gazed at them both with a kind of blank annoyance.

"I ain't a lion-tamer by perfession, nor yet a bear-tamer either, Janet!" he said angrily. "I 'aven't no sort of use for mortal combat with the creature. Why 'e'd master 'Ackensmidt 'imself in less than 'alf a round! I'm quite surprised at you for making the suggestion!"

"You haven't no romance!" Janet said sorrowfully; and then suddenly George Dinham spoke. Personally, I had fancied that he was beyond speech.

"Well, if he won't, Janet, blow me tight, but *I* will!" he said feebly but resolutely. "We've all got to die some time, and I feel like dying now anyways. I've got my lunch in my pocket—a good slice of fat bacon between bread—and as it's no sort of use to me I'm going up them stairs to offer it to that bear. Good-bye, Janet, and if I *do* come back don't forget them words of yours!"

"George, you're a hero!" Janet exclaimed proudly, and the man in blue also gave George a generous word of encouragement as he started. He spoke as one brave man speaks to another.

I watched the young human coming slowly towards me, and as he crawled up the steps I realised that I was conquered—but not by George. The swaying motion of the ship, now that she was not going along, produced a terrible effect upon me. My eyes felt queer and horrid, and I had no strength left at all. As George dragged himself towards me and held out his loathsome bacon sandwich invitingly, I just collapsed in a tumbled heap upon the platform. I felt somehow that I should never want to taste or see food again.

HE TAKES A PAINFUL SEA VOYAGE 207

George saw that I was beaten. The excitement and the exercise seemed to have done *him* good, and his face looked far less green. He gave me a careful glance, and then he turned and shouted to the man in blue.

"I've beat him!" he called out untruthfully. "He's all right now! I'll stand beside him, and if one of you sailor men is brave enough to come up here and work the steering-wheel we might go back home. I reckon we've all had about enough of this sea trip!"

And from the deck a great shout arose. It was partly in praise of the heroic George, and partly an expression of utter joy at the idea of getting upon dry land again. The proportion of people who were not feeling deadly ill was quite small, and they were outvoted by the rest. The red-faced man seemed quite agreeable to the arrangement, and promptly ordered up an unwilling subordinate to twiddle the wheel thing. I passed into a sort of coma, and when I had strength to look up again I found that we were beside the little pier and George was preparing to descend from the platform to the deck.

I was feeling better now that the motion had stopped, and I recognised that it would not be safe for me to stay upon the platform. I did not trust that

fat man in blue a bit. I had made him look ridiculous, and that always makes a human dangerous. I fancied that he might procure a gun. And so I got unsteadily upon my feet and shambled down the ladder after George.

He walked straight up to where Janet was waiting her turn to cross the board that led to the pier. Ernest Browner was near her, but he looked distinctly crushed and humbled.

"Well, Janet, I—I done it!" George said a little sheepishly and yet proudly. "I do hope as how I was romantical enough for you!"

Janet caught hold of his arm with her hand.

"Oh, George dear, it was great of you!" she cried. "I was quite proud to be your lady when you climbed them steps and fought that bear and proved yourself different from all them other cowards!"

I heard a groan. It came from the loudly dressed young man, Mr. Browner. In a way I sympathised with him. I felt that Janet's words had scarcely done justice to *me*. I had no wish to disparage George's valour, but I certainly had not been in a condition to do myself justice in the "fight." As I mused thus, Janet became aware of my nearness.

"Oh!—there he is—that nasty dangerous bear!"

she cried. "George, George, he must have followed you down!"

"Why so he has!" George remarked, turning upon me and regarding me with puzzled bucolic eyes. "What's to be done with him?"

"Can't you send him right away—at once?" Janet asked with nervous cruelty. I had done nothing to *her* that I knew of.

"I don't rightly know how to set about doing it," George answered gloomily. "What if he won't go?"

Janet did not answer this sensible question.

"Oh lor! look at them two men on the pier!" she exclaimed. "Do you think they're dangerous, George? They're dancing and screaming and pointing at us, I do declare!"

My heart fell at her words and I had not the strength to look towards the pier. My instinct warned me of approaching trouble.

"Why I do believe it's the bear they're pointing at!" George said joyfully. "Perhaps they're his masters! They ain't mad, Janet, I expect they're only furriners!"

Then I also looked and recognised the two excited figures upon the pier.

XI

IN WHICH HE PREJUDICES THE WOOING OF CHARLES

WOULD you ever have thought that the man Charles would develop into a lover? I shouldn't! I knew him to be capable of almost anything, but—not that! Somehow I should not have believed it possible for him to speak civilly to *any one* for three consecutive sentences. But there are no rules about you humans! Let me tell you about it all. I ought to be able to do so, because I was distinctly mixed up in the affair. I don't fancy that you humans are much addicted to gratitude, but there ought to be *one* female human grateful to me for the rest of her life. I mean that one whom, thanks entirely to me, the man Charles did *not* marry.

We were making a certain village our headquarters for a week or so. Henri had discovered the owner of a tumble-down cottage who was willing to trust him for the payment of the rent. The man must have been

a *lunatic*. I may say that I overheard Henri remark as much to the man Charles. It was upon a Saturday afternoon that the unseemly and disgraceful incident occurred which afterwards had such an important bearing upon the happiness and prosperity of Charles.

If it were not for this fact I would not tell you about it. It was not the sort of thing that I cared to be mixed up in. As it is, I shall hurry over the affair. We were drudging through our performance outside a hamlet before the usual audience of women, children, and aged, but critical, peasants, when half a dozen young men came loafing along and joined the ring. I gathered instinctively that they had been celebrating the half holiday. Anyway they were distinctly hilarious and ready for any mischief. And it seemed at once to strike them that I, Henri, and the man Charles were fitting butts for their wit.

I don't know if I have given you the impression that my masters are patient men. If so, I have unwittingly deceived you grossly. I certainly have some self-control (Lord knows, I have acquired it painfully!), but Henri and Charles have none. The humour of the average English bumpkin is brick-like in quality. Personally, I should almost *prefer* a brick as a missile. Henri and Charles endured the attentions

of these youths for about one minute by the clock, and then they revealed their true savage natures.

The leader of these idlers was a tall, loutish person with bright red hair. His Christian name, so far as my ear could judge, appeared to be Halbert. He had just finished an exceedingly frank and pointed description of Henri's appearance, and was proceeding amid huge laughter, to ask him certain questions with regard to frogs, when Henri responded in quite a startling fashion. He sprang straight at this tall youth, slapped him furiously upon both cheeks, and then, as the fellow squared up to him with his fists, stretched him flat upon his back with a swift kick beneath the jaw !

I can tell you that the feat caused some little sensation. You English humans are rather too apt to consider the French to be harmless and defenceless people. I do not like Henri, but I should not call him harmless. Halbert was rather badly stunned, and this fact undoubtedly saved us three from rough handling. I gathered from the comments of the crowd that they judged it to be a " police court " case, and the English country human appears to have a violent dread of this development. (I have appeared in the dock myself in my time, and I can appreciate their nervousness.) Anyway, the other young men bent anxiously over

their prostrate leader, and, when the leisurely approach of the village *gendarme* scattered the crowd, Henri was able to lead a masterly unostentatious retreat from the neighbourhood.

In the course of that retreat, which at the beginning was distinctly hurried, Charles became separated from Henri and myself. I may say here that during the past week the man Charles had several times been unaccountably absent, refusing all explanation in answer to Henri's indignant curiosity, and in addition had contracted one or two startling new habits. I have reason to believe that at this period he developed a spasmodic tolerance of water in its ablutionary capacity, and also a taste for careful dress, both of which traits had at any rate not been noticeable before. I was aware of these novel tendencies, partly from my own observation, and partly from listening to the scornful comments of Henri, who has very much in common with the natural savage. Upon the evening following the affray I have described, Charles entered the cottage some two hours after Henri and I had reached its shelter.

"Where 'ave you been, zen?" Henri grunted crossly.

There was an ill-concealed air of elation about the

man Charles. His hat was cocked jauntily upon his head, and his necktie was a natural curiosity. It caught and hurt the eye like a lurid sunset. He appeared to ponder for a moment after hearing Henri's question.

"*Eh bien*, eet ees per'aps well zat you should know," he said at last. "You 'ave ver' many faults, but eet may be zat you mean well. I 'ave been, zen, I 'ave been wiz ze dear, ze beautiful, ze amorous woman 'oom I 'ope to wed!"

Henri stared in amazement at this surprising statement. From my corner I also stared.

"Say eet again, I beg!" Henri said at last, quite courteously, making a kind of gesture with his hand.

So Charles said it again, complacently. I fancy that he rather admired his own choice of language. Henri seemed to hear him as in a kind of dream.

"Ze beautiful, ze amorous woman 'oom 'e 'opes to wed!" he repeated to himself. "But 'ow zen—what does eet mean? Of 'oom ees she amorous? Not—not of zis—zis man Charles!"

I could not but agree with Henri in his inference. It *did* sound absurd. The complacent expression vanished from Charles' face.

"You 'ave 'eard," he said curtly. "I say no more!"

"Ees eet a dream?" Henri murmured bewilderedly. "Or does 'e merely rave? *Ah oui!* eet ees so. 'E raves! Calm yourself, Charles, *mon ami*, and cease from affrighting zis good Joseph and myself! Will you not permit zat I damp a kerchief in ze cool refreshing water, and bind it about your fore'ead?"

Charles said something between his teeth in a low ferocious growl. "Ah! you are *drôle!*" he said sourly. "You 'ave—what shall I say?—ze brilliant 'umour! I laugh!"

And he did so, gratingly and without apparent enjoyment.

"Tell me, Charles, *mon ami*," Henri said indulgently, as a human speaks to a fanciful child, "tell us more of zis beautiful, amorous woman 'oom you 'ope to wed. Eet should be a moving tale, worthy of ze theatre."

Charles glared at him furiously, and then seemed to decide upon an explanation.

"I met 'er four, five days past," he said sullenly. "I was able to do 'er ze small service, and per'aps—'oo knows?—zare ees somezing ver' attractive in my manner. At ze least she invites me into 'er 'ome, where she dwells wiz ze old mother. Since zen I 'ave been several times."

"And now—and now eet seems zat you love 'er,

mon pauvre Charles ?" Henri asked, still with the same soothing tolerant manner.

"And now—I love 'er," Charles agreed very surlily. "Also, I find—I ascertain zat she 'as money at ze bank and zat 'er affairs go well. I do not find zat I love 'er ze less for zis."

Henri sat upright upon his chair.

"All ees well !" he remarked. "I feared—ah ! 'ow I feared !—zat zis Charles 'ad become a mad, but eet ees not so. Eet remains but to grasp is 'and ! Zink kindly, *mon ami*, of myself and zis *pauvre* Joseph, when ze wind 'owls round ze 'ouse and ze beautiful amorous woman 'olds your 'and and mixes for you ze glass of steaming English grog !"

And Henri's voice quite broke, although as a rule he is not an emotional man. A foolish, happy smile came to the lips of the man Charles, when he had stared inquiringly at Henri and had ascertained that he was entirely serious. I suppose he saw plainly the beautiful picture suggested by Henri's moving words.

"*Ah ! oui*, I shall zink of you both !" he said warmly, and Henri for some reason appeared dissatisfied with his answer. Anyhow, his next words were less soothing.

"'Ow ees eet zat she 'as listened to *you* ?" he asked

incredulously. "Are zere not many English pigs 'oo would wish to marry such a woman?"

The man Charles drew himself up to his full height.

"'Ow may we know what eet ees zat ze women love?" he asked modestly. "At some men zey only look wiz laughter—ees eet not so, my friend? At ozzers—ah ze lucky ozzers!—zey never tire of looking! So 'as eet ever been wiz me. I know not why, unless eet ees zat I 'ave ze air!"

Henri snorted—I think involuntarily. For some reason he appeared to be putting restraint upon himself. Perhaps he judged it well to keep upon good terms with Charles.

"Eet may be so!" he said drily. "But—but 'ave you no rival?"

"Ah, oui, zere ees one," Charles admitted unwillingly. "But scarcely a rival, you understand. 'E ees a butcher—unbelievably English in 'is slow 'eaviness—and 'e would wed 'er for ze sake of 'er savings. But she—she laughs, and looks at me wiz joy and pride!"

And the man Charles threw out his chest.

"Ah!" said Henri, and I cannot be sure what he meant by the ejaculation. It sounded disparaging.

"So 'ave no fears for me, my friend," Charles con-

tinued proudly. "Ze woman loves me and will be mine. Now I go out to gaze at ze stars and dream about 'er I love!"

And he pushed open the door and vanished. Henri stared at me for a moment quite mechanically, and then broke into a hoarse laugh.

Then he disappeared into the little kitchen, and I remembered suddenly that I was not chained. Mine is a swift, decisive nature. I slipped through the outer door, glided like a shadow past the man Charles, who appeared to be braving the chilly evening air entirely from a mistaken sense of duty, and made off through the twilight as fast as prudence permitted.

I suppose I had trotted about two miles when it struck me forcibly that I should be wise to find a hiding-place for the night. As I formed this determination I was aware of a huge, shadowy building upon my left. I turned in promptly through a gate and proceeded to reconnoitre.

It looked like a castle. I know now that it *was* a ruined castle, placed by the authorities in the charge of caretakers who should exhibit its beauties to those of the public who possessed the necessary fee. I cannot imagine any one wanting to do such a thing, but I say again that there is *no* accounting for the tastes of you

humans. I saw that one of the lower rooms was lighted up (it was there that the caretakers lived), but the rest of the great ruin was in darkness. It struck me that here was the very hiding-place for me, if I could dodge the lights, and so I wandered to the back.

I scrambled up some broken steps, in a shockingly dangerous condition, and found to my joy that a small wooden door at the top was unlocked. I pushed through it, found that I was in a kind of hall, and then realised to my horror that two humans were coming towards me with a lighted candle! A doorway was to my left. I darted through it like a flash, and crouched down in the darkness. As I did so I heard a woman scream.

"Lor, Jane! 'ow you startled me!" another female voice said peevishly. "Whatever made you squawk like that?"

Some one outside my room was apparently gasping for breath very strenuously.

"Oh, oh, I'm that frightened, mother!" her voice panted at last. "'Oo could 'elp squawking? Didn't you see it?"

"Lor, Jane, I didn't see nothing!" the other voice answered nervously. "What was it—something 'orrid?"

“Yes, yes, it were!” Jane said hysterically. “It seemed to be crawling on its ’ands and knees, and it was long and dark and ’airy, and its dreadful eyes were like red ’ot coals of fire! Oh! mother, mother, I’ve always said as ’ow we ought to ’ave a man in the ’ouse!”

“There generally is one ’anging round!” “Mother” said with a distinct touch of asperity. “*You* seem to take care of that, Jane. I’d almost sooner ’ave a ghost myself—as a fixture. But what are we to do, Jane?”

“I—I daren’t follow it into that room to see what it were,” Jane said in a high, strained voice. “Nor yet I daren’t turn my back on it to go to the kitchen!”

“Whatever are we to do then?” “Mother” asked rather sensibly. “We can’t stop ’ere all night. Keep tight ’old of my ’and, Jane, and let’s make a dash for the kitchen.”

“Oh, I daren’t, I daren’t!” Jane said foolishly.

You must!” the other woman said. “Perhaps you didn’t see nothing—reelly. It may ’ave been that toasted cheese what you would finish at supper!”

Jane appeared to recover sufficiently to snort. Otherwise she was silent.

“Come along, now!” “Mother” continued persuasively. “We’ll be in the kitchen in two twos!

'Ow will you like to stay 'ere after the candle burns down ? "

This question appeared to settle the matter. I heard a stifled scream and then the slither of feet. I realised that the women had retreated, and in a little while, when I judged it safe, I stole out into the great hall to find a comfortable place for a night's rest.

But I may say at once that that castle was a thoroughly comfortless building. I have had a prejudice against castles ever since. There was no glass in any of the windows, and no carpets or even straw to lie upon. I had at last to try and sleep upon damp stones in a kind of cell upon the second floor, and I woke aching all over and ravenous with hunger. The day that followed was endless and terrible. The women, after their fright of the evening before, were thoroughly restless and watchful, and not once did I get a chance of slipping into the blessed open air. I did not care to show myself to them, for fear of raising a pursuit so near to my master's cottage, and I found that I had only exchanged one form of captivity for a more painful one. Under Henri and Charles there had been much work and little food ; now in this horrid castle there was no work, and no food either. I could imagine the piercing scream that would be

raised if I were caught investigating the contents of Jane's larder. During that day I wished several times that I had not run away, but my fine spirit was not yet sufficiently subdued for me to give myself up.

However, with the evening the end of my endurance was almost reached. My hunger was terrible, and I determined to risk an expedition in the neighbourhood of the kitchen. After all, a bear can but die once, and at the moment I felt wonderfully like dying of starvation. So I crept down the ruined staircase, along the hall, undeterred by the sound of voices, and peered very cautiously through the half-open kitchen door.

Can you at all enter into my feelings when I tell you that my eyes fell at once upon the unmistakable figure of the man Charles?

He appeared exceedingly at his ease and at home. He was seated in the only arm-chair. There were three other people in the room in smaller, inferior chairs. Two of them appeared to regard the man Charles with distinctly hostile expressions. These two were an elderly grey-haired female human, and a plump young man with curiously shiny hair and a tight, shiny skin. The third was a comfortable-looking woman of about thirty, I suppose, with bright red hair. She was seated near Charles, and there was

nothing hostile about *her* attitude towards the man. I should have thought more of her if there *had* been.

"Yes, 'e's better now," she was saying; "my poor brother Halbert is distinkly better. But the doctor says that 'e 'ad an 'orrid shock to 'is nervis system."

"'Ow was 'e 'urt, zen, Mamsell Jane?" Charles asked, and I hardly recognised the man's voice. It was so gentle.

"'E was looking on, doing no 'arm to nobody, whilst two wicked Frenchmen was exhibiting their 'orrid dancing bear. Suddingly, without no warning at all, one of the Frenchmen flew straight at Halbert and kicked 'im full in the face! The doctor says if 'e 'adn't been called in at once 'e wouldn't 'ave answered for poor Halbert's nervis system. 'E said 'e 'oped it would be a warning to us always to call 'im in at once. Don't you think, Monseer Charles, that the perlice ought to be able to catch such desperate people and take them up?"

"Yes—ah, yes, I do, Mamsell Jane!" Charles answered in a fervent but slightly broken voice. He appeared to have been a little shaken by the anecdote.

"You're French yourself, ain't you, Mister," asked the shiny-faced young man with clumsily veiled malice. I identified him in my own mind as the

butcher rival of whom Charles had spoken. His voice was meant to be expressive only of harmless curiosity, but he gave me the impression that he had some little difficulty in keeping his hands off the man Charles.

It was the red-haired woman who answered. The coincidence of her relationship to the luckless Halbert was certainly striking and unfortunate—for Charles.

"Don't you be nasty and insinuating, Mr. Briggins!" she said sharply. "There ain't no need for Monseer Charles to tell us that 'e 'as no connection with such low people. I'm sure 'e wouldn't demean 'imself by being seen with such ruffians and their 'orrid bear!"

"No, no, eet ees absurd!" Charles answered hurriedly. "'Ad I been zare I would 'ave torn zem in pieces wiz my 'ands before zis Albert should 'ave been 'armed!"

"Thank you, I'm sure, Monseer Charles!" Jane said gratefully. "I only wish that every man was as brave as you!" And she glanced disparagingly at the plump young man.

"I was there," Mr. Briggins said morosely, apparently stung by the glance, "and I didn't notice them French ruffyuns particularly, but I should 'ave said that one of them 'ad a great look of *you*, Mister!"

Charles shrugged his shoulders and shifted uneasily

P

in his chair. " 'Ow can I 'elp your fancies ? " he asked. " Eet ees well possible zat you were slightly eentoxicated at ze time. What was eet you were saying of a ghost, Mamsell Jane ? "

I began to take more interest in the conversation. Jane proceeded to sketch a lurid and highly fanciful portrait of my appearance upon the previous evening that I am sure my own mother would not have recognised. Jane's mother roused herself from a rather sulky silence and added a few minor and inconsequent details. After which she expressed the frank opinion that Jane had really seen nothing at all.

" I would zat I 'ad been zare ! " Charles said soothingly, when the two females had fought out the question at rather painful length. " Zare are some men 'oo fear ze ghosts, and ozzers 'oo do not. Zare are some 'oo 'ave ze great gift of courage, and ozzers 'oo are but cowards ! " And he and Mr. Briggins glared at each other pointedly and with bitter jealousy.

" Well, " remarked the shiny young man grumpily, " I don't know about ghostses, or Frenchies, or courage, but there's somethink that's been breathing like a grampus outside that door for the last ten minutes, and what I ses is that, if we 'ave got an 'ero in our

midst, 'e might get up out of the only harm-chair and go and see what it is !”

You can imagine what a shock these terrible words were to me! And to the man Charles, I fancy. I heard two shrill screams from the women, and a sound as though all the humans had risen and were scuffling together, and then I glided swiftly along the hall.

I dared not make for the stairs, lest they should see me climbing them. It seemed best to dash for the room where I had hidden upon the previous evening. As I crouched down in a corner of it I heard voices from the kitchen door.

“Oh! something awful glided into the room where it went last night!” the woman Jane screamed.

“I seemed to see somethink glide myself,” Mr. Briggins stated heavily.

“I saw it too, and if some one don't 'old my 'and I shall faint right off!” the elder woman announced firmly.

“I'll 'old it if you hinsist, Mrs. Crigley,” Mr. Briggins said sulkily. “The Frenchy seems to be 'olding some one else's!”

“Per'aps eet would be well to send for ze priest,” the man Charles suggested nervously. “I fear nozzing on zis earth, but eef eet cee *le Diable*——”

"'Oo said just now as 'ow 'e 'ad the gift of courage and all, and didn't go for to fear nothing?" jeered Mr. Briggins, apparently cheered by this sign of weakness from his rival. "I'm only a plain Henglish butcher, but blow me if I'm afeared!"

"Then per'aps Mr. Briggins won't mind going alone and seeing what it is," suggested Jane. "Per'aps 'e could be spared more easily than—other people!"

"I dunno so much about that neither!" growled Mr. Briggins, seemingly disgusted by the suggestion. "I ain't going to risk my life to make no Roming 'oliday for no one, but if that Frenchy 'as the pluck to come along I'll go anywhere that 'e'll go!"

"I—I am not afraid!" Charles faltered. "Come, zen, and we will eenvestigate—eef Mamsell Jane wishes us to take ze grave risk!"

"And I won't see Monseer Charles himperilling 'is brave life alone for us!" the woman Jane said affectionately. "You keep one side of me, Mother, and we'll go along with them, if Monseer Charles don't mind keeping fast 'old of my 'and."

I heard a muttered remark from the disgusted butcher, and then to my horror the sound of steps. They were coming towards my room!

Outside the doorway they halted, and I could see the

flame of the candle, held in Mr. Briggins' shaking hand, jiggling up and down. I was tempted to rush out upon them and end the suspense, but I was not without hope that they might even yet turn back.

"Does any one 'ear anythink?" I heard Mr. Briggins ask.

"I can distinkly 'ear—something—breathing 'ard!" the woman Jane said in a kind of fearful whisper. And her mother moaned a tremulous confirmation of the statement.

"It strikes me that the himportant question is this," Mr. Briggins remarked more firmly, "Do ghostses breathe or do they not?"

"'Ow ees eet possible zat zey should live wizout breath?" Charles asked with a pathetic attempt at intelligent argument. But I could tell from the man's voice that he was badly scared.

"Well, I'm going to see anyway!" Mr. Briggins stated courageously, and next moment he appeared in the doorway, dragging Charles behind him by the arm. And both stood staring at me for a long minute in silent wonder.

Charles' face was quite yellow with fear, but the relief was so great that he appeared to lose his presence of mind. "Why, eet ees only zat wicked Joseph!" he

cried, and moved towards me. As for me, I came to him and rolled upon my back at his feet. It is not my habit, as you know, to fawn upon the man Charles, but at the moment I was cowed and starving, and I thought that civility on my part might lead to food.

"You seem to know each other very well, like old friends!" Mr. Briggins remarked drily after rather an ugly pause, and then the two women peered round the doorway and screamed at sight of me. "Oh! Monseer Charles, a great bear!" Jane cried. "'Ow very brave of you to master it!"

Charles said nothing; it was the man Briggins who spoke.

"I dunno that it's so very brave neither!" he remarked. "I've been putting two and two together, and I begin to see daylight, as you may say. This is the bear as was dancing when poor Halbert was 'alf murdered, and this is one of them two kicking murderous Frenchies! Blow me tight if it isn't! Look at the hanimal greeting its dear master! I suspected it all along, and now I'm certain. Ask 'im for yourself!"

But there was no need to ask. The man Charles was silent—but the look he gave me might have killed a more sensitive animal! I think he realised that the

game was up. Jane's mother sniffed with indignant triumph (I gathered somehow that she had never liked Charles and had always prophesied something of this sort), and Jane herself began to cry.

"Oh ! to think of it !" she sobbed. "To think as 'ow 'e's one of them as nearly killed poor Halbert ! I might forgive 'im for that, but I can't never never forgive 'im for the lies 'e's told ! 'E won't never be the same to me again !"

"And a good job, too !" remarked Mr. Briggins with rather horrid triumph. "'Oo can tell 'ow many wives 'e 'asn't got already in furrin parts abroad ?"

Jane started violently at this suggestion. Charles looked at Mr. Briggins as though he meditated an assault ; then he looked at Jane and tried one last appeal.

"Eet ees true zat I was zare," he said, "but eet was not I 'oo kicked ze *pauvre* Albert. Eef I 'ave concealed my 'armless share in ze matter, and my acquaintance wiz zis *méchant* bear, eet ees because of ze great love, ze passion, which ees in my 'eart. Is zis love, zis passion, to be—what would you say ?—a waste—a dead loss ?"

But Jane only hid her face in her apron and sniffed. It was a final sort of sniff. I recognised that, and so

did Charles. I have no wish to dwell upon a painful scene. Mr. Briggins and Jane's mother had been slowly but steadily edging us towards the open air, although giving me as wide a berth as was possible under the circumstances, and personally I was too subdued even to resent the fact that the door was banged at last almost upon my tail. I was too hungry to think of escape. Charles and I, a miserable couple, just slunk through the darkness to the cottage, and there the astonished Henri received us with an ill-timed jocosity that was almost the cause of bloodshed.

XII

WHICH TELLS OF A TRAVELLING CIRCUS AND A PLOT

THE day was hot and dusty. The signboard above our heads presented, by a strange coincidence, the distressingly libellous portrait of a brown bear. I should have liked to hug its painter—hard.

Beneath it Henri and Charles had come mechanically to a halt. Personally, I had a sort of feeling in my bones that the chance of another delicious spell of freedom was coming. Henri beckoned to an urchin, who was the only other living creature in sight.

"Be'old zis bear!" he said seductively. "Eet ees for you to watch 'im whilst we pass within. Eef 'e moves to run away I shall emerge in answer to your screams. Ees eet agreed, *mon petit*? Zare shall be one penny, eef all goes well."

The boy nodded, and Henri turned to me with a very different expression.

"Dare to move at your peril, vile, treacherous in-

grate!" he hissed. "Eef you 'ave moved one step, one leetle step, when I emerge, I will tear your skin from you still living!"

That is Henri's way of speaking. Charles's method is that of a man armed with a club.

"And afterwards I will kill you ver' slowly, and then devour you!" he remarked with a kind of mechanical ferocity that is characteristic of the man.

I lay down on my back and waved my paws in the air submissively. I did not like doing this—it hurt my pride and my back—but I wanted to send them into the *cabaret* quite satisfied and unsuspecting. Henri would have ordered Charles to stay with me, if there had been the least prospect of the man obeying him. As it was, they disappeared together, and I sat up on my haunches and looked about me. That feeling in my bones was growing stronger.

I was right, as usual. For one minute the boy and I stared gloomily at each other, and then a strident female voice rang through the sleepy noonday hush:

"Wilferid you young rascal, where are you?" it demanded. "If you ain't back in two twos I'll lesson you!"

I could not wonder that the lad shivered. That voice frightened even me a little. He did more than

shiver. He stole one regretful glance at the door of the *cabaret*, and then set off at a brisk trot in the direction of the voice. He appeared to wish to give the impression that he had been running like this for miles. When he had disappeared, I took to my heels down a grassy lane that ran behind the *cabaret*.

I ran with splendend endurance for about three miles without pulling up, but sop is not a good diet for long distance running, and even my superb pluck has its limits. I came to a stand at last with my dry tongue lolling through my muzzle. It was most regrettable that I had not been able to get rid of that muzzle before starting. I don't know if you have ever worn one, but if you have you will understand my feelings about the abominable thing. Personally, I always feel only half a bear with it on. But you cannot have everything in this world.

I found a stream by the road and quenched my raging thirst, and then I went bearfully on at something between a jog-trot and a walk. Then, when almost dead-beat and terribly hungry, I came upon some beautiful long grass beside the lane, and curled up on it, meaning only to rest for a few minutes. As a fact, I fell fast asleep at once.

I was in the middle of a really beautiful dream.

Somehow or other my path was blocked by a mountain of brown, oozy honeycomb. I saw at once that there was only one thing to do. I must eat my way through the obstacle. I was just going to settle down to the glad task, when—I heard a voice and woke. Life is always crammed with disappointments, but at that moment it seemed more crammed than ever.

The voice had said: "Blow me tight, Maria, if it ain't a bear!" (What a gift, by the way, you humans possess for stating undeniable facts!) I opened my eyes disgustedly, and looked about me. And this is what I saw as a miserable substitute for my mountain of honeycomb.

The lane was blocked by quite a string of high waggons covered with black stuff, and by two or three queer sorts of cars that had once apparently been covered with gilt. There was a pleasant homely smell in the air that brought back memories of the Gardens at Paris where I was born, and from one of the covered waggons there came a kind of fretful yowl that made me prick my ears. But I had something else to think about. For I was simply surrounded by humans, who appeared deeply interested in me. It was flattering, in a way, that interest, but somehow I felt that I could have rubbed along very happily without it.

The male who had spoken was quite the fattest human that I have ever set eyes on. He wore his clothes very loosely and where possible unbuttoned as though constraint of any kind was painful to him. As I looked at him his face was still flushed and creased with triumph at the brilliancy of the remark that I had overheard.

The female whom he had addressed as Maria did not appear to think so much of that triumph. She was very small and thin and wrinkled, with black beady eyes, and at first sight you were disposed to regard her with genial good-nature as something of a natural curiosity and nothing more. But you did not do this for long. She possessed a will of iron, and the power of cowing even the bravest. I speak with some feeling.

"Yes, Nathaniel," she said with slow and dreadful scorn, "you're quite right, my man. It is a bear."

Nathaniel seemed to shrink visibly inside his loose clothes, and some one tittered and then pretended to cough. I found later that the right to gird at and humiliate the fat man was strictly reserved to herself by his small wife.

"What 'ad we better do with 'im, missus?" Nathaniel asked humbly. "'E seems loose on the roads, as you might say."

"I'm just considering, Nathaniel," Maria said slowly, and then with a sudden rush of fierce feeling she added, "and it 'ud be easier to consider sensibly if you'd leave off asking silly, nonsensical, childish, foolish questions!"

She was a very sudden woman. As for Nathaniel, I quite thought he would lie down on his back and wave his paws in the air. In a way, the man had my sympathy. There was a rather painful silence, and then Maria spoke again :

"Where's that idle rascal, Little Jumbo?" she asked. The person named appeared to try to answer, but she swept on ferociously.

"Don't dare to tell me that 'e's flirting agin with that hussy, Mamsell Violette! If 'e is, I may forgit my sex and be vierlint to both of 'em!"

"I ain't!" said a frightened male voice, and then some one, whom I afterwards found to be Mademoiselle Violette, interfered. She had a sharp English accent, a turned-up nose, and a rather striking crop of gilt hair.

"I'll trouble you, Mrs. 'Iggs, not to couple my name with no 'umin man's!" she remarked. "I've always 'ad the repertation of keeping meself very much to meself and whilst I do me duty on the slack wire to

ginal satisfaction I won't stand no interference from nobody not even if they do 'appen to pay me wages which aint 'alf what I'm worth !"

She spoke in one long breathless sentence, with a gradually rising voice, and even Mrs. Higgs appeared to recognise in her an opponent who could worthily hold her own. Her voice was conciliatory as she answered.

"That's all right, Mamselle," she said. "So long as you does your duty in that state of life to which you've been called, which 'appens to be the slack wire, you and me won't quarrel. Come 'ere, Jumbo !"

A small thin man with a long pale face came forward. Mrs. Higgs looked at him disparagingly, and then addressed him in a dreamy, reflective voice. The woman was a perfect artist in her methods of discipline.

"Ah, Jumbo," she said, "if you was to apply yerself to your perfession, and work out new jokes which might ercasionally raise an 'alf snigger, instead of sticking to them old gags which are only an annoyance to all as listens to 'em, you might be almost worth your keep."

The thin man writhed.

"I went down well last night, Mrs 'Iggs," he said plaintively.

"Certainly there was some happlause, Jumbo," Mrs. Higgs observed judicially. "But they was drunk, them two' oo was laughing at you, and it was me 'oo was clapping so 'ard from be'ind, although it went agin my conscience to do it. The rest of the 'ouse was watching you with a kind of 'orrid silent pity that might 'ave turned to vierlence at any minute. You'll 'ave to himprove—a lot. Do you see this animil?"

"Yes, Mrs. 'Iggs," said Jumbo more cheerfully.

"'E'll take Sambo's place in that 'umorous turn what you used to do together. You'll 'ave to train 'im. I gives you a week to do it in, and just see that this one is 'umorous."

She turned to the fat man.

"Don't you dare to go for to contradict me, Nathaniel," she said sternly. "This animil 'as been sent to us by a generous Providence to take the place of poor Sambo what passed away from some onknown but appariently painful illness last week. There's 'is empty cage waiting for 'im and all. Put 'im in at onst, and get on without wasting any more blooming time!"

She was a wonderful manager, that small thin woman. In a moment one of the waggons was brought up, the black stuff stripped off, and I was bundled up a sloping plank into a small, dark cage. I

was feeling too tired and hungry to resist, and besides, that woman gave me the vague feeling that there was no telling what might happen to me if I did. I felt that she would stick at nothing. I curled up on the straw of the cage and went to sleep, with the reflection that anyway I had contrived to give the slip to Henri and Charles, whatever else might be going to happen in the near and probably painful future.

When I woke up it was evening and my waggon had come to a halt with the rest. We were in a big field outside a small town, and as it was Sunday there was no performance that evening. You will have guessed already, as I did myself, that I had been picked up by a small travelling circus and menagerie. It was, of course, a move up in the world from a professional point of view. I felt uncommonly pleased, I need not say, that Henri and Charles had not been included in the promotion.

But I was roused from these reflections by feeling my cage lifted from the waggon. It was wheeled into a big lighted tent, and then three people came and looked through the bars at me. They were Mr. and Mrs. Higgs and Little Jumbo. Mr. Higgs had apparently been interrupted at a meal, for he was dealing faithfully with the remains of a large mutton chop

which he held in his fingers. The sight made me realise how ravenous I was. I am not carnivorous as a rule, but at that moment I could have cheerfully eaten human flesh. We glared at each other for a minute, and then Mr. Higgs spoke. His voice might have been clearer, but for his attentions to the chop bone.

"'E's got 'is muzzle on," he said brightly. (Mr. Higgs was always a wonderful man at drawing attention to fairly obvious facts.) "I shouldn't wonder a bit but what 'e's getting 'ungry."

"Ah!" said Mrs Higgs darkly. "I rather believes meself in letting 'em *be* 'ungry at first. It seems to make 'em far more docile and wishful to please."

I began to hate that woman!

"It's all right if you 'ave'nt got to go into the cage with 'em," Little Jumbo observed rather pointedly. It appeared that this task had been assigned to him.

"Don't you be a cur, Jumbo, my man," Mrs. Higgs observed unpleasantly. "Go into the bear at onst! Do you 'ear me?"

"In you go, Jumbo," Mr. Higgs said jocularly. "It's only like taking a large pill. You 'arf shuts your eyes, takes a sip of water, and it's gone down—per'aps. The sooner you does it the sooner it will be over."

"You shut up, you and your pills!" Mrs. Higgs commanded truculently. "And as for you, Jumbo, don't let me 'ave to speak twice!"

"It ain't that I'm afeared of bears," Jumbo observed thoughtfully. "I quite likes 'em as a rule, and that poor Sambo was like a brother to me, except when 'e was actually trying to 'ug me. 'E seemed to be the one person what reelly understood me. But, you see, this bear is what you might call strange to me."

"'E is that," Mrs. Higgs agreed. "That's why I tells you to make 'is acquaintance. Besides, if you don't go in and take off 'is muzzle, 'ow are we going to feed 'im?"

This argument appeared unanswerable, to me, but Jumbo still hesitated.

"'Ave you got the men 'andy to beat 'im off with bars in case 'e gets up to any of 'is little games?" he asked nervously.

"Don't you go for to worry about that, Jumbo," Mrs. Higgs said briskly. "If you starts wrangling together, I'll just send in Mr. 'Iggs to siperate you."

The stout man started sharply, and if I ever saw resolution upon a human countenance I saw it on his then.

"In gineral I does what you says, Maria, for the sake

of peace and quiet," he said doggedly. "But now you're asking too much—far too much. It ain't that I'm afeared, but I can't be spared possibly. If I was mauled, badly mauled by that 'ere bear, 'oo, I asks you, would manage this 'ere circus?"

"We could spare you quite well," Mrs. Higgs declared bitterly. "But I ain't addressing you at the moment. I'm agoing to count three, Jumbo, and if by then you ain't well inside that cage there'll be a vacancy in this 'ere circus."

Jumbo hesitated no longer. I was at one end of the little cage, and he unbolted a door at the other and slipped inside. As I may have told you, I am naturally of a genial and courteous disposition, but Henri had omitted to give me any breakfast that morning. I was half mad with hunger, and with a deep growl I made at Jumbo really meaning mischief.

He only had a little switch in his hand. The cage was very narrow, but he contrived to slip my first heavy, blundering rush, giving me a painful tap on the nose as I went past, and I crashed against the bars. When I turned he was standing right over me, and somehow I realised that he was not afraid any longer. He was a small, weak-looking man, but he seemed to have grown bigger. His eyes were very steady, and

he was speaking in a firm, kind sort of voice that did not annoy me as Henri's always did. Fear is quite foreign to my nature, and so I don't know that I was afraid of him, but somehow I began to like him. I crouched down in a corner and waited. He came right up to me, and began to rub the back of my neck with his hand. It was a very soothing feeling.

"Poor old man," he said. "I believe you're only 'alf starved and not reely nasty. You ain't 'alf a bad sort, and we're going to be good pals. I'm going to take off that muzzle and give you some grub at once."

He undid the straps and threw the hateful thing through the bars. Then he said, "I'll be back with the grub in 'alf a minute, old man."

I believed him and let him leave the cage. I could have made it warm for him if I'd liked, you know. But I did not want to, and almost at once that little dirty man came back with the best meal that I had set eyes on since I had opened a certain luncheon basket. It was nothing wonderful in quality, but, thank goodness there was plenty of it and some little variety. Carrots and turnips and bread, and some rather good biscuits. I filled myself very thankfully, and he stood by and

stroked me while I ate. When he went out at last, I heard Mrs. Higgs say thoughtfully.

"I'm allus right, Nathaniel, some'ow, allus ! 'Ow often 'ave I said to you that, under my orders, Jumbo ain't 'alf such a fool as 'e looks ? As for that bear, 'e shall live and die with us, as the song says."

But Mrs. Higgs, for once, was wrong. I should like to tell her as much—from a safe distance.

For, as it turned out, I was just a week with that circus. In many ways it was not an unhappy time. It was a restless, rattling, dusty sort of life, but it is better, in a way, to travel inside a cage than to plod along muzzled, with sore feet.

In the morning, when the big tent was up, outside a new village, Jumbo would take me into the tan ring. He was far and away the best male human that I had ever met, and quite soon I began to understand what he wanted me to do. I was rather frightened and puzzled at first, but he had a way of explaining everything in a nice soft voice, and giving bits of sugar at intervals, that made the work quite a pleasure. He was not trying to teach me anything very difficult at first. My chief task was to learn not to mind when Jumbo hit me playfully with a bladder, or fooled round generally. All the same I took care not to learn any-

thing quite as quickly as I could have done. It is no use making yourself too cheap in this world. Because then you get much less sugar.

I think I should soon have grown to hate the cage. I like change and company and all that sort of thing. But when Jumbo found that I was quite friendly and harmless and well-behaved, as I am when I get enough to eat and am not knocked about for nothing, he took to leaving the door of my cage unbolted, except when we were travelling. He wanted me to get used to people and to noises, and of course this suited me down to the ground. There were always men about, so that I could not have run away if I had wanted to, but I used to loaf round comfortably and chat to the animals in the other cages.

It was not a good menagerie, not a patch on my old home in Paris, for instance. There was one very old lion, who rarely woke except at meal-times, and whose coat had deteriorated in the most distressing way. Not that he minded much. The men could do what they liked with him, and the only thing that he grumbled about was that they *would* wake him up and push him about with some nonsensical idea of cleaning out his cage. Then there was a tired but very snappish hyena, six most insolent monkeys, and a couple of

young and restless wolves. It was these two last who made a proposal to me that might have had very striking results if fate had not intervened.

In the course of our very first chat they voiced a theory that had often occurred to myself. What they said was, why should they keep these humans in luxury by their attractions, and only get a very bare living themselves ? They objected strongly to their cage and to the size of their meals. They considered that they ought to be the masters, and that the humans should be inside the cages. "Well and good," I said at once practically, in answer to these remarks, "but have you any plan for bringing about this desirable state of things ?"

Yes, it seemed that they had a plan for rebellion, and my arrival in the circus had removed the one serious difficulty, the job of unfastening the cage doors. (They wanted me to do this at once by the way, but I suggested that I had better just hear their plans first. They had not much discretion, those two wolves.) Their idea was that on some given night the cages should be opened simultaneously, and the humans overawed by a united phalanx of animals. They had thought it all out. Old Bob the lion might not be much good for actual warfare, because of his

teeth and his rheumatism, but, if he could be once thoroughly wakened, his appearance and his experience would be invaluable. As Max, the male wolf, said, the only difficulty was about thoroughly waking him. Then there was Bill the hyena—his chronic state of ill-temper would make him a splendid fighting ally. He with the two wolves and myself would make up a formidable force. As for the monkeys—they were no use to any one. However, Lily, the lady wolf, appeared to think that they might be very acceptable for commissariat purposes. She spoke of this with some pleasure. The monkey's cage was just opposite, and the little reptiles had an objectionable habit of pelting and insulting the wolves.

All this seemed to me to be very fairly feasible. But I asked them what they proposed to do afterwards, and here we had a slight difference of opinion. Both the wolves were unanimous that no quarter could be shown to Mrs. Higgs. I agreed with them there, feeling that while the woman lived there could be little hope of a peaceful ending to the rebellion, but their other plans were rather too vague and bloodthirsty for my taste. I knew that there would probably be a quite serious row if we kept these people in cages for "commissariat

purposes," as Lily suggested. Some one would be almost bound to interfere. And, anyway, I was determined that Jumbo should not be hurt. The man had treated me fairly, and I was not likely to forget it. I pointed out some of these facts to the wolves, and after a good deal of wrangling they agreed to be ruled by me. As I told them, they were extremely lucky to have a travelled, broad-minded sort of animal to advise them. Afterwards I spoke to Bill the hyena, who was ready for anything, but who was a difficult person to plot with at all pleasantly because of his abominable manners; and to old Bob the lion, who, in a rare moment of wakefulness, said that he would support any scheme that promised to put a stop to this perpetual cage-cleaning; and it was settled that on Saturday night the great rising should come to a head.

However, it was not to be. That very evening was the occasion of my first appearance in the circus ring. Jumbo had seemed a little doubtful of my fitness, but Mrs. Higgs had stated that "she just wouldn't 'ear no talk about it." And, of course, that settled it. It was rather a nerve-shattering ordeal, I can tell you. Of course, I had been used to performing in the open air, but there was something about the raucous band, the glaring lights, and the noisy people that made me very

jumpy. I was all of a tremble as I advanced with Little Jumbo into the arena.

But he spoke to me in his quiet friendly way, and my great natural courage came to my assistance. As we came in, I on my hind legs with a little cocked hat (which I hated) stuck on my head, and Jumbo in his queer gay clothes walking beside me and making all sorts of funny grimaces, there was a great shout of laughter. Lord knows, you humans are pretty easily amused! They little knew, those grinning people, that I had all the cares of a rebellion on my shoulders, and that Jumbo was probably wondering whether his wages would be paid that week!

But I was mildly pleased to think that I had helped the little man to raise a good laugh, and I could not resent this tribute to my powers. I was just getting over my nervousness and beginning to get a grip on my part, when—an interruption came. A voice screamed from the jam of spectators, an enraged, surprised voice with a horrid, provincial French accent that, alas, I did not fail to recognise.

“Zat is Joseph!” it said. “Pigs, traitors, assassins, zat ees my bear!”

And another voice followed:

"*Oui*, eet ees zat traitor ! Let me approach 'im, zat I may kill 'im ver' slowly !"

You have guessed the owners of those hateful voices ! Charles and Henri were standing in the cheapest part of the tent, waving their arms and dancing in a way that made them violently unpopular with the people crowded around them. Even as I looked, they fought their way free, and I collapsed on the tan in a crushed heap as they hurled themselves with bristling hair into the arena.

I am brave, you ought to know by this time that I am brave, but this cruel shock had come so suddenly !

When I looked up again there were quite a number of people in the ring. Charles and Henri were being held more or less still by the entire staff of the circus, Mr. and Mrs. Higgs were screaming for silence, and a large country *gendarme* was standing unhappily beside them. He seemed intensely puzzled by the question of the disposal of his huge hands and enormous feet.

All the people were in a delighted uproar, but they quieted down at last, in order, I think, to hear what was going to happen. Mrs. Higgs had been busily priming her husband, and when there was comparative silence he spoke in a hoarse bellow.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I 'ave to apologise for

this hunseemly hinterruption. The two onprincipled furrinners before you, hunder the hinfluence of drink and hexcitement, 'ave made an onjustifiable claim to my bear Sambo. Ladies and gentlemen, I will restrain my natural hindignation, and honly say that this is an 'orrid lie. The bear Sambo 'as been brought up in this menagerie, and looks upon me halmost as its father. Ladies and gentlemen——”

At this point Mr. Higgs' voice, failing under the strain, became only a thick rumble, and for three minutes the audience abandoned itself to pure enjoyment. Many of them seemed to be addressing Mr. Higgs as “good old farver.” In the first pause the man Henri's shrill scream made itself distinctly audible.

“'Ear me, good people, I implore you !” he wailed.

The audience granted his appeal at once in huge delight. They seemed to think that these proceedings were better than any circus. Personally, if I could have made a bolt for it, I would have done so. I knew of what Henri's tongue was capable, if he were given a hearing. Contrary to Mrs. Higgs' express instructions his captors partially released him, giving his arms and hands full play. Had they been held I do not think he could have spoken.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you are English, and ze English are ze most fair and justest peoples in ze world. Zis ees my well-loved bear Joseph, 'oom I lost a long, sad week ago, and you will see zat 'e is rendered to me. I have cherished 'im so fondly, and taught 'im 'is so many feats, and 'e is all zat I 'ave. Will you keep 'im from me, will you break 'is 'eart and mine by ze cruel separation, or will you 'ear my prayer? Be'old, I am on my knees to you!"

And he was.

The crowd were obviously a little moved by this specious appeal. As for me, in that moment I saw the great plot ruined, and myself returned to my inhuman masters. In the anguish of that thought I rolled over and over on the tan. Henri had the impudence to hail this as the confirmation of his words.

"You see 'im, good people!" he cried. "'E longs, zis good bear Joseph, to return to ze dear master 'oo loves 'im!"

It was then that Mrs. Higgs addressed him.

"This won't do 'ere, my man!" she said grimly "These monkey tricks may do well enough in your native Proosher, but they won't go down in honest Hengland. You've got to prove Sambo's your property,

which you can't do, or else I gives you and your fellow villing in charge this very minute!"

Henri drew himself to his full height dramatically, and waved his arms high in the air.

"Woman, I will prove eet!" he cried. "Zis very moment I will prove eet!"

A voice called "Three cheers for the Frenchy!" and they were given generously. When the horrid din died away, Henri turned to the *gendarme*.

"You are ze Law, monsieur, and you shall prove my case!" he said. "Inside ze left foreleg of zat bear zare is one naked place. Eet ees what you would call a birthmark. Lift up 'is leg and see!"

What the man said was true, in part. The "birthmark" that he mentioned was where he himself had kicked me! I knew that the game was up, and so, I think, did Mr. and Mrs. Higgs. There was a moment's respite, due to the fact that the *gendarme* resolutely declined to touch me, but Henri darted forward and revealed the bare patch himself. And the people saw it.

"Let the poor man 'ave 'is bear!" roared a voice, and all the crowd took up the cry. Their socialistic sympathies were apparently all against Mr. Higgs as a man of property, and they howled to him to be 'a blooming tyrant" no longer. They spoke definitely of

"smashing up the show," and even Mrs. Higgs was cowed. As for the *gendarme*, he glanced nervously round him, and advised immediate surrender. He also refused to read the Riot Act, although implored by Mrs. Higgs to do so. Mr. Higgs, shaking like an enormous jelly, held up his hands for silence. To my horror I realised that his fear of the excited audience had got the better of his cupidity.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are all Henglish 'ere, thank 'Evvin, except this furriner," he said somewhat obviously. "And, being a Henglishman, I can do a generous hact. This bear Sambo is my property, and no one else's, but Nathaniel 'Iggs don't grudge giving 'im to this poor hignorant furriner. The man's a thief, and, what's more, 'e ain't commonly honest, but 'e shall 'ave the bear. Now, ladies and gentlemen, will you 'ave the goodness to be quiet, and to *permit* the *performance* to *proceed*?"

And so, alas! it came about that I and Henri and the man Charles went out into the cool, sweet-smelling night together. I believe that Jumbo cried a little as I was led away, and I know that my own eyes felt rather queer and horrid. The last thing that I heard was a loud, peaceful snore from the cage where old Bob, except at meal-times, slept.

XIII

IN WHICH, IN SPITE OF OBSTACLES, HE FINDS A HOME

THE sun was high when I awoke and glanced stealthily at my still sleeping masters. The barn seemed filled with the displeasing sounds that poured from both their noses, and more especially from that of the man Charles. I seemed to detect a note of indignant reproach in the snores of both my masters as I glided noiselessly into the open air.

It was a lovely morning, and, although muzzled, I was filled, as ever, with the joy of freedom. I trotted steadily along the sandhills, and when I saw any one coming it was easy for a bear of my subtlety to find safe cover. It must have been about the middle of the morning when I came to a little lonely cove and saw a white tent upon the sands below me.

It struck me at once that it might be as well to shelter for a while inside this tent if, as it appeared, it was deserted. In this way I should evade any pursuit

that my masters might have started. Besides it might contain food of some sort. Certainly I was muzzled, but with skill and patience it is possible to eat even through a muzzle. There appeared to be no humans in sight. A huge, bright blue sea animal, something like a porpoise, but of a variety that I had never noticed before, was plunging and splashing close to the shore, but I paid little heed to it. When hungry I am not greatly interested in Natural History. I sniffed cautiously about the tent, and then, as I could hear no sound from within, I pushed through the doorway.

It was quite empty of humans, but at one side there was a pile of garments, and on the top of them—oh ! joy, a paper bag filled with large sweet biscuits. These I ate very thankfully, although much hampered by my muzzle. Then I arranged the garments as a kind of couch and stretched myself upon it.

I was not very far from dozing off when, as usual, an interruption came. I thrilled to hear the patter of large, bare, flat feet upon the sand. They were obviously coming towards me. I lay still, no other course being apparent, and in a moment something came through the opening of the tent.

It did not occur to me at once that it was human. It was what I had seen in the water, and had mistaken

for a huge, bright blue porpoise. I did not know if it were dangerous or not, and so at first sight I growled at it. But I was quick to see my error. It *was* a human—a very fat, red-haired, elderly male all dripping wet and dressed in a tight suit of some blue material. He was rather a startling sight, I can assure you. I know now that he had been bathing—a habit that Charles and Henri regarded as fraught with some peril to the delicate human frame.

For perhaps thirty seconds he met my gaze, and then with a bubbling cry he turned and broke from the tent. He did this literally. Because, although he aimed blindly at the opening, his excitement prevented him from finding it cleanly. As it was, there was a horrid rending of canvas, and the centre pole collapsed, striking me a very painful blow upon the head. Of course that brought the whole tent down upon me, and for two minutes I fought wildly with the choking flapping stuff which held my legs as though I had been netted. When, half suffocated, I struggled free, I must admit to a slight feeling of annoyance against that fat wet human.

But my anger was only momentary. I may be hasty tempered, but, thank goodness, at bottom I am neither cruel nor bad-hearted. I was quite grieved and

ashamed at the distant sight that met my eyes. The stout human had clearly headed up the cove with the blind instinct of finding shelter, but, just before the sand ended, it seemed to have struck him that he was scarcely fittingly dressed for a public promenade. You humans have absurd notions about clothes! Anyway, this one was picking up masses of dried seaweed, and was arranging them clumsily and inartistically about his person above the tight, wet blue suit.

My heart bled for the man as I stood and watched him. His figure was really not suitable for such a get-up. The spectacle he presented when he had completed his toilet more or less to his satisfaction might have moved some animals to laughter. It brought sympathetic tears to *my* eyes, and I set off after him at a brisk trot with the idea of trying to apologise for my unintentional fault.

But the human saw me coming, and he disappeared inland over the low sandhills with the seaweed dropping from him as he laboured along. It was disappointingly obvious that he mistook my motives in following him; but I am of a fairly persistent nature. I tracked him partly by scent, but even more by the trail of dropped seaweed, along a winding road until the sound of voices

brought me to a stand before a half-open garden door.

"In short, you accuse me of falsehood or delusion!" some one was saying angrily. "When I do not even know that the savage creature is not following me now! Would anything less than a bear, a peculiarly enormous and ferocious bear, have caused me to risk cold and rheumatism and ridicule by parading the public roads in this—this distressing costume?"

Some other human appeared to choke audibly.

"No, Uncle Richard, upon my soul I don't think it would!" he answered rather hoarsely.

"I note, Walter, that you find my plight amusing," the angry voice remarked. "I say nothing of affection, but the respect of a nephew should cause you to conceal your indecent mirth!"

"I'm—I'm really awfully sorry, uncle!" the other human answered. "But wouldn't it be well to go indoors and put some clothes on? You may catch cold, and er—Trix may be out any moment."

"I shall do so," the first speaker said very stiffly. "But, Walter, I fear that I shall not be able to forget your utter want of sympathy."

I slipped through the half-open door, and reconnoitred from behind some handy bushes. Upon

a lawn surrounded by trees a young male human was doubled up in a low sort of chair, and I just caught a glimpse of a broad blue seaweed-covered back disappearing towards the house. I rather liked the look of the young human, although I feared for the moment that he was in some sort of seizure. I was just wondering what to do, when a young woman, a distinctly pretty young woman, came running from the house.

"Oh, Walter!" she cried, and then she stopped. "Whatever is the matter, dear?" she asked.

"I'm laughing, Trix," he said weakly. "Have you met my uncle?"

"Yes, I was coming to tell you," she answered. "He seemed to be in a bathing suit covered with seaweed. Whatever has happened?"

"He has struck up an acquaintance with a bear in the bathing-tent," the young human said, and he gave her a perverted account of what had happened. "Trix, I could love that bear!" he added at the end of the story.

"I thinks that's rather unkind," Trix stated, a little doubtfully.

"Not a bit—not a bit!" the human called Walter said emphatically. "I've always had a hankering

after a bear as a pet, and most other animals, for the matter of that. But, as you know very well, Uncle Richard won't even let me keep a dog !”

“Oh, that's rather absurd,” Trix said. “Of course he couldn't prevent you if you insisted. He's only our guest after all.”

“Yes, and our Quixotic sense of hospitality has made us give way to him at all points,” the young man said sadly. “To please him we got rid of Ralph, the St. Bernard, and even Thomas Henry, the armadillo, just because he detests all animals. The house hasn't been the same since Thomas Henry went to the Zoo! I'm getting a little sick of it. Great Cæsar! here comes his bear !”

I had walked calmly out on to the lawn. I had taken a fancy to these people. As for this young man who had always hankered after a bear, he seemed the very person for whom I had been looking so long. I wanted a home—ah! I can't tell you how much I wanted a home. And it shouldn't be my fault if I did not find one now.

I halted a few yards away from them, and solemnly, and yet with grace, I went through my entire *répertoire* of tricks, and finally I sat up and begged in a fashion that would have moved the hardest heart.

Certainly these two young people were impressed by my powers.

"He's really rather a darling," Trix remarked.

"He's a ripper," Walter said. "I wonder where he's come from, and who he belongs to?"

Curiously enough, this question was promptly answered. For at that moment I shivered and wilted as a piece of purely French profanity floated through the sunny air, and was followed by the appearance of Henri and Charles upon the lawn. They had seen us over the garden-wall, and had burst in to drag me back to captivity.

But the young man cut short their flood of angry explanations.

"I've just two questions to ask you about this bear," he said. "In the first place, is he gentle and harmless if well treated?"

Henri spread out his rather dingy hands.

"*Mais oui, monsieur!*" he said emphatically, and it was almost the first time that I had felt any liking for the man or had heard him speak the simple truth.

"Good!" said the man Walter. "And now, secondly, is he for sale?"

Henri shrugged his shoulders with simple dignity.

"Zis bear Joseph is dear to our 'earts, monsieur," he

said. "Is value to us is more, far more, than ze abominable lucre."

And Charles, in his crude way, said something to the same effect.

"That's all right," Walter said cheerfully. "But, apart from all that nonsense, what will you take for him?"

You are to imagine my anxious emotion while this conference proceeded.

Henri and Charles consulted together and then the former named a price, which I happen to know was just three times the sum they had paid for me in Paris, and for which they could (however inadequately!) replace me.

Walter nodded, and turned to his wife. I strained my ears desperately, but was unable to catch their whispers.

He turned back to Henri, and after ten exciting and voluble minutes my price was compromised and paid. The parting between my masters and myself was brief and entirely unemotional. How shall I describe to you my feelings as I saw them leave the garden, as I realised that I had passed from their power? But these blissful thoughts were interrupted by an exclamation.

"By heaven, that fearful thing has followed me!"

Uncle Richard, clad in less striking garments, had appeared upon the lawn. His fat red face was convulsed with rage and fear.

"What—what does this mean, Walter?" he asked indignantly.

"It means, Uncle Richard, that I've just purchased this bear. Let me introduce him to you in due form. His name is Joseph, his gentleness is guaranteed by his former masters, and he has a most charming *répertoire* of tricks."

Uncle Richard spluttered.

"You mean to say that you have purchased this ferocious beast which chased me through the public roads in a degrading guise! I must differ strongly from you, Walter, if this is your idea of respect and duty."

"I'm sorry, uncle, but I feel sure he didn't mean to hurt you. He was probably almost as frightened as you were."

"I resent the word 'frightened,' Walter," Uncle Richard said fiercely, although still keeping his distance from me. "No one could have been cooler or more collected than I, even at that dreadful moment. But if you have the least regard for my wishes you will get rid of the horrid creature instantly."

"But I've only just bought him, uncle," the young man protested. "Do try and take a kinder view of the poor animal. I'm sure he's most anxious to make friends."

This was undoubtedly true. At that moment I felt kindly disposed towards all the humans in the world. I advanced slowly towards Uncle Richard with the idea of reassuring him, and, if he would permit it, shaking hands with him. But he did not await my coming. With an inarticulate cry, he turned and fled back to the house.

"It makes me feel rather guilty, Walter," Trix said, although she was laughing. "Poor Joseph seems to upset your uncle frightfully."

"It can't be helped," Walter said coolly. "Heaven knows we've been Arabian in our hospitality to Uncle Richard, and have let him ride rough-shod over us. But even hospitality can be carried too far. Now I'm going to feed Joseph, and show him his quarters."

From that hour began a time of happiness for me unmarred save by one fear. The food was above reproach, my quarters were roomy and luxurious, and my new master and mistress were more than kind to me. But Uncle Richard had clearly set his heart on effecting my dismissal, and the thought that he might

succeed kept me awake of nights. I could not account for his hatred, and I found it rather galling to my slight but very natural vanity. And so I set myself to win this fat man's love.

After a few days my master began to give me my liberty about the garden. My manners, which I can only describe as winning, had had their usual effect on both him and my mistress, and they appeared to esteem and trust me. I made use of my freedom to throw myself in Uncle Richard's way upon all occasions, with the idea of proving to the man that I had nothing in my mind but respect and affection for him. I trained myself to fetch his slippers literally at all hours of the day ; I was ready and even anxious, late or early, to perform my entire range of tricks for his amusement ; but I should be departing from the truth if I said that he met my advances in the spirit in which they were made. I have known him, for instance, hurl his slippers violently at my head, when I had laid them before him with all courtesy prior to his departure for a walk. But I persevered, for I was far from suspecting the black depths in his nature that were to be revealed to me.

And so, just a week after my purchase, when I awoke from a short doze on the lawn to find the

garden empty, I instantly felt that it was at once my duty and my pleasure to seek out Uncle Richard, and persevere with my campaign of conciliation.

I had found that he retired to his bedroom every day after lunch, and I determined to find my way there and see if he were still obdurate.

So I passed quietly into the house and climbed up the staircase where I had never been before. From the second door, as luck would have it, outside which I listened, there came forth an unmistakable sound. Uncle Richard was clearly within that room, and as clearly asleep. The door was ajar, and I slipped in with the idea of giving him a charming surprise when he awoke.

Uncle Richard was stretched upon the bed. A bright orange-coloured handkerchief was tied round his head, and he was wrapped in a long purple garment. In moments of relaxation he was rather a showy dresser. I gazed at him affectionately, and wondered what I could do for his comfort. Almost simultaneously I heard a loud buzzing sound, and realised that a large wasp-like insect was threatening Uncle Richard's face.

I determined at all risks to slay that wasp.

With this noble intention I raised myself until one forepaw rested upon the bed and the other was at

liberty for my purpose. I waited with admirable patience until the insect settled, and then deftly and yet with force I brought down my paw upon it. Alas, alas ! not until the blow had fallen did I realise that the wasp had settled upon a portion of Uncle Richard's massive frame !

The cry that broke from Uncle Richard's lips was ear-piercing. At the moment it startled me so frightfully that I caught my claws in the bed-quilt, and brought it and Uncle Richard to the floor on top of me.

Then I broke free and fled—fled with his cries pursuing me, until I crouched in the darkest corner of my quarters.

I heard the sound of other voices and the patter of feet, and when at last I ventured to raise my head Walter and Trix and several other humans were looking at me with wondering reproach.

Uncle Richard was there, too, supported by a stalwart man-servant. A maid came running with a glass filled with a yellow liquid, and the stalwart man-servant held this to Uncle Richard's lips. When it was empty he waved the tumbler sternly from him and spoke in a hoarse, shaky voice.

"Walter, the fact that I am alive at this moment,



"Then deftly, and yet with force, I brought down my paw upon it."

although, as I fear, terribly injured, is due only to my own presence of mind," he said. "Fearfully has the instinct which warned me against that bear of yours been justified! What must be your feelings of anguished self-reproach at this moment!"

"I really hardly know yet what has happened, uncle," Walter said.

"I was stretched in meditation upon my bed, as is my habit at this hour, when something glided stealthily into the room. It was that bear, and I read murder in its eyes! Even then, when a weaker spirit had failed, I remembered the alleged power of the human eye, and I fixed my own upon it with all the will-force at my command. The animal could not meet my gaze, and to this fact I undoubtedly owe my life. But it struck blindly at me before fleeing from the room, and only a medical man can gauge the extent of my injuries."

My heart burned as I listened to this story, and yet I was just enough to recognise that Uncle Richard might have honestly mistaken my motives. I heard them arguing, and noted with gratitude that my master seemed incredulous. He spoke of my gentleness, and he even hinted at last that his uncle might have been dreaming. It was then that Uncle Richard raised his voice in shrillest anger.

"This is too much, Walter!" he said. "But it is for you to choose. Either that bear is shot, or I must leave this house!"

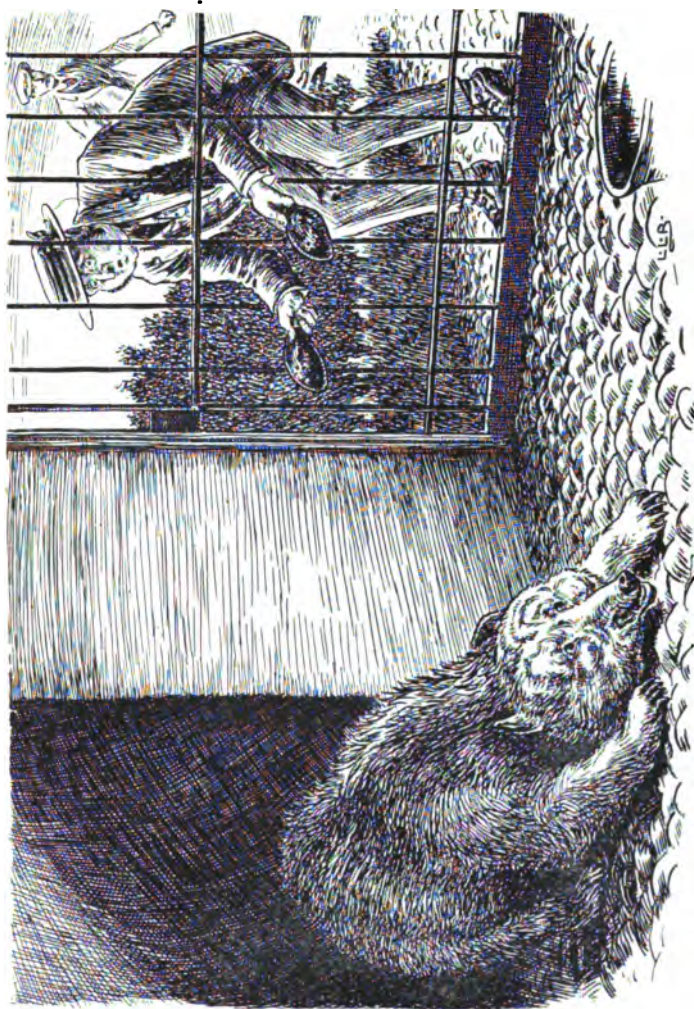
"I don't want to lose either of you, uncle," Walter answered evasively and, I fear, untruthfully, and somehow he persuaded his excited relative to conclude his argument within the house. Personally, I stayed where I was, and was glad to do it, too.

I will be brief about the rest and hasten to the final dramatic and even shocking scene. Two miserable days passed, in which I could not help feeling that, with the best intentions, I had fallen in my master's eyes, and then I woke from a broken sleep to find Uncle Richard, to my amazement, standing in the twilight before my run. And wonder of wonders! he was offering me two large, sticky, brown buns!

"Good bear, then! Eat them!" he was saying in a rather curious voice.

My first impulse was to obey him, but then suddenly I had a strange instinct of fear. Why was this man who hated me offering me buns? I crouched away from him and began to shiver, and something made me give a loud wailing kind of moan.

"Eat them, you foolish creature, eat them!" hissed



"Wonder of wonders! he was offering me two large, sticky, brown buns!"

Uncle Richard, and then he looked round nervously as my master came up.

"What's the matter, uncle?" he asked. "I have never heard Joseph make that sound before."

"I—I was trying to make friends with him," Uncle Richard said confusedly. "I've brought some buns for him."

"Then why won't he eat them?" Walter asked in surprise.

He knew my feelings with regard to buns. He stared at them and at me and at Uncle Richard, and then he spoke in a stern sort of voice.

"Is there by any chance anything in those buns that would hurt Joseph, uncle?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" blustered Uncle Richard. "Your question is insulting—what do you mean by it, sir?"

Walter took the second bun from his uncle's hand. The other was lying untouched on the stones before me.

"It is very easily proved, uncle," he said quietly. "If you will eat a piece of this very wholesome-looking bun I will at once apologise for my unjust suspicions."

Uncle Richard turned a kind of sickly yellow.

"I—I will do nothing of the sort," he said. "Buns

do not er—suit my digestion. I—I much resent your attitude!”

“Then I will!” said my master and he broke a piece from the bun.

But Uncle Richard gave a kind of shriek.

“Don’t—don’t—you mustn’t eat it!” he cried. “It—it was only my joke! I—I will leave the house! I should prefer it if that bear is to stay!”

My master said nothing in answer, but he shrugged his shoulders. Then he picked up the first bun from the stones and followed his treacherous relative into the house.

I have never seen Uncle Richard from that hour, and my one hope is that he will never return to mar the happiness of this home that I have found.



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